Human Resources Development Canada
Internal Audit Bureau

Développement des ressources humaines Canada
Bureau de vérification interne

FINAL REPORT

Improving Internal Communications

Project No.: 403/98

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1. Introduction

On an inspection tour during the construction of St. Paul's, Christopher Wren is said to have asked a stonecutter "What are you doing?" "Cutting stone," *the stonecutter replied. Further along, he asked another stonecutter what he was doing.* "Building a cathedral," *the man said.*

Communicating Organizational Change: A Management Perspective
edited by Donald Peter Cushman and Sarah Anderson King,
State University of New York Press, 1995

Results of the Human Resources Centre Canada (HRCC) Environmental Survey for 1997 showed a slight improvement in employee satisfaction with internal communications over 1996. While this improvement is encouraging, the HRCC Directors' Council recommended to the National Management Board that a national review be done to advance internal communications tools and strategies. This national review is a joint Council/Internal Audit Bureau (IAB) response to that recommendation.

Effective internal communications will be critical to the successful implementation of the new *Vision for HRDC.* Simply stated, effective communications is good business.

"*Effective Communication has been recognized as the prime factor in making much needed change happen inside organizations... communication is a means to an end - the success of the organization.*"

Communicating Corporate Change: A Practical guide to Communication and Corporate Strategy, Bill Quirke, MacGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1997

The HRDC Audit and Evaluation Committee approved IAB's proposal "to identify exemplary practices and ensure that internal communications processes support departmental values and objectives in a timely, cost-effective manner." This national review was also recommended by many participants in the diagnostic risk sessions facilitated by IAB from October 1997 through January 1998.

2. Objectives

The review objectives were to identify, analyze and widely share information on successful internal communication tools, approaches and practices (i.e. best practices employed successfully by HRCCs across the country and in regional and NHQ offices).

This should result in a better understanding of:

- strategic approaches for effective internal communications; and
- barriers and enablers to effective internal communications.

3. Review Scope

The topic of internal communications is very broad. Accordingly, it was agreed that this review could not cover all aspects. Instead, we decided to focus on successful internal communications tools, approaches and practices across all business lines and all levels of departmental organization to ensure a value-added result.

All the best practices identified during the focus groups, or collected using questionnaires and/or interviews, are detailed in *Appendix C* of this report.

We also recognized that participants would likely have suggestions to improve internal communications practices. Although the data collection did not focus on what is not working, we did take note of any suggestions that employees might have. It should be noted, however, that these suggestions were not subject to the same level of analysis as the best practices. The suggestions are listed in *Appendix D* of this report.

The functional groups and regions who participated in this review are listed below:

Functional Groups

Human Resources Investment Branch (HRIB)
Insurance
Income Security Program (ISP)
Labour
Communication
Systems
Financial and Administration Services (FAS)

Regions

Alberta/N.W.T./Nunavut
Saskatchewan
Manitoba
Ontario
Quebec
New Brunswick
Nova Scotia

Refer to Appendix A for a detailed listing of offices visited.

4. Review Approach

The Team Aspect

Basil Orsini and Suzanne Ryan were the Core Team members within IAB leading this review, collaborating with many review associates throughout the department, and benefiting from the advice of a select group of review advisors.

Role of Core Team

- provided leadership
- developed the methodology with the review team
- provided coordination
- undertook the reporting and promotion
- assisted with some focus groups

Role of Virtual Review Team

- participated in a national meeting to develop the review methodology
- identified successful tools, approaches and practices from an HRCC, regional or national perspective
- validated the successful practices
- participated in a national meeting to analyze the results of the review
- contributed to the national report
- shared the results with their colleagues

Role of Advisory Team

- ensured appropriate linkages with other departmental studies
- ensured value-added results
- assessed the benefits for subsequent reviews

A Unique Review Approach

The approach taken for this review was innovative for a number of reasons:

- The HRCC Directors' Council is the client.
- The review focused on identifying "best practices" rather than on what is not working.
- The review team members were assigned from functional and regional groups across the country.
- A self-assessment approach was used.
- A "virtual team" approach was used.

"Virtual Teams Work"

Overall, the review team members found working on the virtual team to be a rewarding experience. As one team member noted, "*It has been the most rewarding experience, while gaining regional exposure. I found skills I didn't know I had.*"

The team's energy and innovativeness were also noted as being positive forces. The use of a virtual team provided a richness and focus to the review that could not have been achieved were IAB to undertake this review on its own. It was found to be a positive approach to promoting change by placing emphasis on best practices.

The design of this review is:

- *solution-oriented* - what is working well now and is needed in the future;
- *collaborative* - a virtual review team with many HRDC associates and advisors from different parts of the organization and the country;
- *bottom-up* - beginning with an HRCC perspective, it builds on the contributions of both employees and managers; and
- *developmental* - the detailed methodology was developed with the participation of the client and the review team.

The review team members adapted the methodology to their own sites and used one of the four approaches outlined below. In all cases, however, a standard communiqué was used to advise managers and staff who participated in the focus groups or interviews, or who completed a questionnaire on the review. A copy of the communiqué is attached in *Appendix B.*

Approach 1

- The communiqué requesting best practices was distributed using the existing website.
- Based on responses, focus groups were put together to validate the data, facilitated by Learning Consultants in each Zone.

Approach 2

- The communiqué was sent to directors.
- The review team member met one-on-one with each of the directors, to get buy-in and to recommend participants.
- The communiqué was then sent to participants of focus groups.
- The focus groups were held with managers and staff, facilitated by the review team member(s).

Approach 3

- The communiqué was sent to directors, and then to interviewees.
- The review team members then interviewed selected managers and staff.

Approach 4

- The review team member met with the directors, to get buy-in.
- The communiqué was then sent, with the questionnaire, to each director.
- Each Director completed the questionnaire for his or her branch and returned it to the review team member.

5. Major Findings - Best Practices

Focus groups and interviews with more than 300 managers and employees, and in one area a questionnaire, yielded 144 "best practices" in internal communications. For each best practice identified, we requested that the participants identify the following, where possible:

- An outline of best practice being identified
- The background (How it got developed?)
- What made this communication tool, practice or approach successful?
- The source of the information
- Illustrative quotes
- Contact name, telephone number and location.

These 144 best practices can be grouped into eight broad categories and are listed below in alphabetical order:

1. Managing Technology
2. Meetings
3. Orientation
4. Recognition
5. Supporting People
6. Tools
7. Visible Leadership/Information Sharing
8. Workteams

Refer to *Appendix C* for the detailed reports for each of the best practices identified during the review.

It is important to note that the data suggest that these communications tools and practices in themselves are not enough. There are underlying values that must be present to ensure successful communication. The following values were inherent to effective communication for the best practices identified; trust, relationships, planning, respect, authenticity, recognition, openness, integrity, interaction.

"Communicating effectively is about relationships."

The following values and principles were found to be essential elements running through the eight broad themes:

- Builds relationships
- Builds a sense of community
- Creates opportunities for networking and sharing of best practices
- Fosters trust
- Allows for participation of all staff
- Provides immediate feedback
- Consistent communication (everyone gets the same message, at the same time)
- Common understanding
- Team building
- Information sharing helps employees to make informed decisions
- Celebrates and recognizes achievements/staff contributions
- Leads to improved performance
- Increases efficiency and effectiveness of operations
- Face-to-face and two-way communications emphasized
- Empowers staff; created by staff, for staff
- Creates a better understanding of what others in the department are doing
- Creates opportunities for learning and development

"Communication is a process, not a product."

In addition to these values, there were a number of aspects of the communication process that were repeatedly identified. These are worth noting:

- Regular
- Consistent messages
- Brief and to the point
- Structured (e.g. the use of an agenda and the provision of minutes)
- Transparent
- Open
- Horizontal
- Timely

Under each of the eight themes, the best practices have been grouped by common activity. A brief summary of each is provided.

1. Managing Technology

"Put faces to names and to e-mail addresses."

E-mail	E-mail properly used — short messages, subject clearly identified; quick and efficient way to share information widely.
Voice mail	Voice mail when properly used — change message as required and monitor messages — leave clear messages; quick and efficient way to make contact with people.
Intranet/ Internet	Intranet — keeps people informed about HRDC programs and services. Easy way to share relevant and useful information widely. Internet — Easy access to information products related to our work, and quick and efficient when dealing with external sources.
Websites	Websites for functional groups provide awareness of HRDC programs and current information on staff members and area of responsibility.
Localnet	An information "broker" sorts all the e-mail messages sent to a given site and sends them to predetermined folders, most of which are accessible by staff in the office.
BTV	Use of Business Television for training or to relay important messages from the Deputy Minister to all managers and/or staff.
Buddy system for e-mail and voice mail	Someone checks the voice mail and e-mail messages of those who are away from the office for an extended period of time (i.e. vacations) to ensure clients are served.

2. Meetings

"Effective communication is a cornerstone of an effective organization."

Team meetings	Informal, regular meetings between manager and staff; meetings are brief and use an agenda. Opportunity for discussion. Consistent message.
Staff meetings	Informal, regular meetings with staff, by staff; meetings are brief and use an agenda and provide minutes. Usually, but not exclusive, to self-managed teams. Chair is rotated. Opportunity for discussion. Consistent message.
Management meetings	Regular meetings, with an agenda and record of decisions afterwards confirming action items, where all members provide updates. These updates are then shared with staff.
Ad hoc meetings	Impromptu, quick meetings which are called whenever information on emerging issues needs to be disseminated right away.
Networks	Can be formal or informal. Used to share ideas, tools and practices with colleagues.
Conference calls	Brief, regular calls for geographically dispersed teams to share hot issues, updates and information on important priorities, and sometimes make decisions.
Video conferences	Brief, regular calls for geographically dispersed teams to share hot issues, updates and information on important priorities, and sometimes make decisions. Can also be used to conduct interviews to save on travel costs when interviewer and interviewee are not in same location.

3. Orientation

Sessions for new employees	To introduce new employees to the organization and to provide them with an overview of the organization (mandate and structure).
Mentoring	New employees are assigned a staff member who will act as a mentor to respond to their queries and act as a sounding board.
Booklet	Orientation booklet to welcome new staff to the organization. Booklet provides an overview of the organization and what is important to know.
Profile of employee new to group	Use a local newsletter or e-mail to introduce a new employee (including a picture) or to profile an existing employee under a did you know section.
Office tours	Opportunity to meet staff face-to-face (putting faces to names) and to get a sense of what they do.

4. Recognition

"Tim Horton" moments	Informal group activities such as golf, lunches, breakfasts, or to celebrate birthdays.
"Pink Panther Award" or "Fuzzy Bear Award"	Awards given weekly by staff, to staff for random acts of kindness, for helping out or for honourable mentions. The employee gets to keep the pink panther or fuzzy bear in his or her office for that week.
Managers cook breakfast	All managers host and pay for a breakfast that they cook for staff.
Long Service Award	Gift (to a maximum of $200) presented in recognition of 25 years of service in the Public Service (e.g. watch)

5. Supporting People

"Technology cannot replace face-to-face interaction."

Assignments/ Secondment	Opportunity for staff to go on assignment or secondment to another area/region to increase knowledge and skills.
All-staff retreats	Conferences/workshops held annually for all staff in a group/Branch. These sessions are held off-site and incorporate such things as team building, social/fun activities, and a developmental component.
Off-site workshops	Workshops held off-site for specific business goals, usually for a multifunctional, widely dispersed working group.
Training	Regular training to keep employee skills current.
Conferences – National/Regional	Attendance at national and regional conferences by employees at all levels; not just restricted to managers.
Social events	Team/Branch BBQs, Christmas parties, potluck lunches, and birthday celebrations, for example.
"Sacred Time"	Setting aside a specific time each week for special purposes.
SWOT Team	Scarborough Working Together team established to address the issues raised in the HRDC Environmental Assessment Survey.
Expert User – Lead Person Program	Expert or lead person identified to deal with specific issues (e.g. foreign workers or youth issues).

6. Tools

Information Technology Booklet	Booklet developed by Systems to introduce people to the use of the Intranet/Internet.
Brochures	Handy reference tool for HRDC staff and our clients. Provides information at your fingertips and is very user friendly and easy to follow.
Regular newsletters	Keeps staff informed of ongoing activities and future direction, recognizes staff contributions and special events (e.g. long service, retirements) and allows for staff input.
Suggestion box	Employees can raise concerns/issues anonymously, which are followed up on a regular basis.
Component Installation Requests (CIRs)	A management tool designed to track and display the processing of all component installation requests. It covers the delivery and set-up of new versions of systems, applications and hardware.
Electronic Forecasting System	System developed for Brandon and Dauphin offices to ensure all new business and slippage for monthly forecasts of contribution funds are captured.
Whiteboard	Use a whiteboard to track who is here, to note issues for the day, thoughts for the day, birthdays, etc. Use colour and cartoons — have some fun. Place in a focal point where all will see.
Book binder of procedures	Written procedures for operational staff.
Learnscape software – self-assessment tool	Software which allows staff to do a self-assessment against core competencies and identify learning needs.

Surveys	Efficient and effective way to get a pulse of the organization followed up with appropriate action.
Emergency Voice Communication System	Loudspeaker system for emergencies.
Voice Bulletin System - 997-3000 at NHQ	A dial number in NHQ region to find out the status of operations in the building (e.g. building closure updates).
Contact lists	List of names and telephone numbers of people in a group/Branch, identifying points of contact and functional responsibilities.
Name/picture tags	Employees wear a nametag at all times when in the office, sometimes with a picture, so that employees who don't know each other can get acquainted.
Foreign Worker (FW) form	Employer first contact information sheet regarding hiring of foreign workers (kept with FW applications next to phone) is completed before applications are mailed or handed out.

7. Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

"If communications are not timely, they are a waste of time."

Minutes of meetings	Minutes of management meetings are made available to staff on a regular basis.
Senior management debriefings	Senior managers debrief staff after important meetings (e.g. national conferences, Management Board Meetings). This is usually done either face-to-face or by e-mail.
Deputy Minister messages: face-to-face or BTV	Important messages from the Deputy Minister that are communicated either face-to-face or using BTV. Employees want to *see* her.
Management feedback	Feedback on performance.
Breaking the Barriers Report	Clients invited to attend group/Branch meetings to help identify how we can be more helpful and to identify barriers to service.
Organizational decisions on staffing	Communicate staffing decisions to all staff.
Weekly e-mail report	Director prepares and distributes a weekly e-mail report to keep staff informed of initiatives, happenings and events.
Posting of regional E.I. Performance Report	Report that contains detailed analysis of performance and any issues that need to be addressed to improve.
Senior management addresses training groups	Brief address at beginning or sometime during training session. Gives training participants the chance to have questions/concerns addressed and allows for two-way discussion.

8. Workteams

"Instant information, instant communication, instant response."

Working groups	Small groups of employees who work together for a specific project and set period of time. They meet regularly, have a mandate and expected outcomes.
Self-directed workteams	Team of employees who manage themselves — workload distribution, holiday schedule, etc.
Virtual Team	Team of employees that are not all located in the same site. They often communicate via conferencing and e-mail.
Staff initiated workteams (e.g. CONCEP)	Employee-initiated self-managed groups, supported by management, to deal with workplace issues identified by staff.

The best practices identified in this review seem to support the following benchmarks for effective communications:

"Eight benchmarks for effective communications:

1. *The CEO must function as an* ***open communication champion****.*
2. *There must be a* ***match between management's words and actions****.*
3. *There must be a commitment to* ***two-way*** *communication.*
4. *There must be an emphasis on* ***face-to-face*** *interaction.*
5. *There must be a shared responsibility for* ***employee input****.*
6. *Good and bad news travelling up to management should be encouraged (****Multidirectional****: upward, downward, lateral and diagonal throughout the organization).*
7. *Stakeholders interests, contributions and concerns must be known.*
8. *Employees should be encouraged to use an* ***open communication strategy****."*

Communicating Organizational Change: A Management Perspective
edited by Donald Peter Cushman and Sarah Anderson King,
State University of New York Press, 1995.

6. Major Findings - Suggestions

Although the focus of the review was to identify best practices in internal communications, it was also recognized that those who participated in the focus groups may also have suggestions on how to improve internal communications in their respective areas or in the department as a whole.

It is interesting to note that the suggestions made in some offices validated/reinforced the best practices identified in other offices.

The suggestions gathered during this review are listed in *Appendix D*. Below you will find a summary of these suggestions under the same broad categories as identified for the best practices.

1. Managing Technology

There were numerous suggestions with respect to the use of e-mail. Generally, it was felt that this is a successful approach to communication if properly used. It is a time saver, efficient, and can reach a lot of people at one time. However, e-mail has a time and place and should not replace face-to-face communications. The most common suggestions for improvement were:

- Sort e-mails by priority and store full broadcast messages in a common site so that people can access at will.
- Ensure the subject and action required is clearly visible, either in the subject line or by some other distinguishable feature.
- Multiple attachments are not appreciated.
- Keep the message brief.
- Provide a brief summary at the beginning of the message so that I can judge if I need to read further.

With respect to the Intranet/Internet, the most common suggestion was to develop an efficient search engine.

2. Meetings

Small, informal group meetings on a regular basis were often suggested.

3. Orientation

There seems to be a consensus that orientation booklets/sessions are desirable for new staff to introduce them to the organization and for them to get an idea of what everyone does.

4. Recognition

It is important to recognize staff for long service, for a job well done, etc.

5. Supporting People

Staff retreats, access to managers, opportunities for learning and development and regular feedback on performance was suggested.

6. Tools

There were several comments made on the use of voice mail. As with e-mail, people feel this is a good tool, if properly used. Voice box messages should be changed as required and when leaving a message be clear and concise. I should not have to replay the message a number of times to understand the whole message.

Another common suggestion was the use of BTV for Deputy Minister and senior management messages, in contrast to videos and written messages. It was also felt that BTV is not appropriate for all types of training. Training is often better done face-to-face.

There needs to be a happy medium of electronic and other methods of communication.

7. Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Face-to-face communication with managers is preferred over all other methods of communication. In particular, senior management presence is always appreciated.

Employees also appreciate when managers share information from national conferences, workshops and meetings.

There is so much information and too many sources. Information needs to be better coordinated so that linkages are clearly understood by all.

8. Workteams

Joint initiatives with representation from all stakeholders are recommended.

7. Recommendations

To fulfil the objective of this national review to improve internal communications across HRDC, we recommend that:

- this report be widely distributed to all RC managers;
- managers and staff be encouraged to consider and adapt these best practices to their own circumstances;
- best communications practices be published and maintained on an HRDC Intranet site;
- future employee surveys measure employee satisfaction with internal communications;
- there be a commitment to follow-up on this review;
- HRDC create the capacity within the department to provide advisory services for Internal Communications; and
- HRCC Directors Council pursues additional projects to improve internal communications, such as in the areas of training and coaching.

APPENDIX - A

REVIEW SCOPE TABLE

Review Scope Table

Region/ Functional Group	Methodology Used	Offices Visited	Review Team Member
Alberta/NWT/ Nunavut	11 Focus Groups, and 1 visit one-on-one	1. RHQ Alberta 2. HRCC Edmonton West 3. HRCC Edmonton South 4. HRCC Calgary South 5. HRCC Calgary North 6. HRCC Calgary Centre 7. HRCC Red Deer 8. HRCC Grande Prairie 9. HRCC Lethbridge 10. HRCC Yellowknife 11. HRCC Iqaluit	Mike Balfour
Saskatchewan	10 Interviews	Interviews were held with operations staff, regional office staff, service delivery managers, and Regional Management Board members	Bob Cochran, Nick Giambattista, and Rhonda Laing
Manitoba	3 Focus Groups	1. Team North (The Pas, Thompson, Flin Flon HRCs) 2. Team South (Portage La Prairie, Brandon, Steinbach HRCs) 3. RHQ Manitoba	Janet Hlady and Helen Dyrkacz
Ontario	7 Focus Groups	1. Belleville Sub-Regional Office, Insurance Managers 2. Belleville Sub-Regional Office, Insurance staff 3. HRCC Scarborough, Managers 4. HRCC Scarborough, Staff 5. RHQ Toronto, Managers 6. RHQ Toronto, Staff. 7. HRCC Owen Sound, Managers and staff	Mike Monette with Zarko Poljsak
Quebec	Documented inventory of 3 existing initiatives	1. Localnet initiative set up by HRCC Montreal North 2. Quebec Region's Intranet site 3. Component Installation Requests (CIRs)	Andre Gobeil with Louise Dufour

Region/ Functional Group	Methodology Used	Offices Visited	Review Team Member
New Brunswick	5 Focus Groups	Fredericton Bathurst (2 groups) Moncton Zone 3	Kathleen Miner, with Bonny Pond and Basil Orsini of IAB
Nova Scotia	8 Focus Groups	NRCC Glace Bay (2 groups) Northern Zone Employment Counsellor Network	Evelyn Power-Reid with Learning Advisors in each sector
Human Resources Investment (HRIB) at NHQ	Questionnaire sent to each Director General	Questionnaire completed by Labour Market Directorate, Youth Initiatives Directorate, Human Resources Partnerships, and Learning and Literacy Directorate at NHQ.	Lidia DiBiaise
Insurance at NHQ	1 Focus Group	Participants from IPOS, I&C, Insurance Policy, Insurance Program Services, Insurance Management Services, and Insurance Operational Training at NHQ.	Facilitated by Suzanne Ryan of IAB
Income Security Programs (ISP) at NHQ	1 Focus Group	NHQ	Zarko Poljsak
Labour at NHQ	1 Focus Group	Participants from the Secretariat, Operations, FMCS, SP&P, and WID at NHQ	Facilitated by Brenda Whitehorne (Review Team member)
Communication at NHQ	1 Focus Group	Participants from Corporate, ISP, and Youth Communications, and Production and Regional Liaison at NHQ.	John Spence, group facilitated by Basil Orsini of IAB

Region/ Functional Group	Methodology Used	Offices Visited	Review Team Member
Systems at NHQ	1 Focus Group	Participants from Corporate Communications, Office Automation services, IT Quality Management, Planning and Group Services, Operations and Applications Group1 - NHQ.	Brad Feasey
Financial and Administrative Services (FAS) at NHQ	1 Focus Group	Participants from Policy and Systems, Assets Management, Information Management, and the FAS Business Centre at NHQ.	Brenda Whitehorne

APPENDIX - B

COMMUNIQUÉ

IMPROVING INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS IN HRDC

COMMUNIQUÉ

IMPROVING INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS in HRDC

You have been asked to participate in the National Review on Internal Communications in the workplace. The purpose of this communiqué is to provide you with additional information on this review.

Why a National Review on Internal Communications in HRDC?

While the results of the HRCC Environmental Survey for 1997 show a slight improvement from 1996, internal communications still remains a significant challenge. The HRCC Directors' Council has recommended to the National Management Board that a national review of internal communications be done. This national review, approved by the Audit and Evaluation (AEC) Committee, is a joint HRCC Council/IAB response to that recommendation.

This national review was also recommended by many participants in the diagnostic risk sessions facilitated by IAB across the department during the period October 1997 through January 1998.

Objectives of the National Review

Our objective is to identify "best practices" on internal communication tools, approaches and practices and then share this information widely.

"Best Practices" - What Are They?

Best practices in internal communication are those tools, approaches and practices that you have experienced and which resulted in effective communication. This experience may be communication of a specific initiative or work objective that created awareness, understanding, made you feel supported, or ensured active commitment on your part.

Examples of some best practices include:

⇒ *Large group interactive sessions with management and staff, which provide the opportunity not only for employees to hear from their managers but also for managers to hear from staff.*

⇒ *Use of websites to post information on various topics accessible to all staff. "AGORA" in the Ontario region is one example.*

⇒ *Brief daily "stand-up" team meetings at the beginning of each day with manager and staff to review the days "to do" list and to raise concerns, issues of importance.*

Review Approach

Although the HRCC Council is the client for this review, communication "best practices" will be identified at all levels, be it local office, regional or national headquarters.

The review is being lead by the Internal Audit Bureau, as part of their 1998/99 Audit Plan and will be carried out by a team of employees from NHQ branches and regional and local offices.

Review Process

A series of focus groups will be held during March and April 1999 so employees can identify successful internal communications tools, approaches and practices. You have been asked to participate in a focus group that will last about 90 minutes and which has the full support of your manager. Participation is completely voluntary.

Communication tools include such things as newsletters, videos, e-mail, and memos, for example. Communication approaches include such things as training, meetings, conferences, seminars, while communication practices can be one-way versus two-way, formal versus informal, active versus passive, frequent versus infrequent.

What Will Be My Role as a Participant?

As a participant, you will be asked to participate in a focus group to identify those tools, practices and approaches to internal communication, which you have experienced in your present work or in previous work experiences. Anonymity will be protected; no names will be used, and quotes will only be used with your expressed permission.

The focus group will take place:
When?
Where?
Time?

We have provided an overview of guidelines to effective communications in the attachment, which may help you in identifying best practices that you may have experienced in the workplace.

What Will Happen After the Focus Groups?

The information that you and your colleagues provide will be the basis of a report to be presented to the HRCC Directors' Council in late May. This report will later be presented to National Management Board and then to the Audit and Evaluation Committee in September 1999. After that the results will be widely shared with all participants and across the department.

Thank you for your interest and participation.

For clarification or additional information please contact:

Name & number o f Review Team Member

Guidelines for Effective Communication

Don't try to get too many messages across (People do not retain more than three ideas from a presentation or a discussion).

Behavior communicates more than your words.

Employees prefer face-to-face communication.

The immediate superior is the preferred source of information.

Effective communication is timely and open.

Even when you don't communicate, your silence communicates.
(If no explanation is provided to help people to understand a decision, they will fill the gaps themselves and come up with their own conclusions).

Showing is more powerful than telling.

Engaging is more powerful than telling.

Share the thinking, not just the conclusions.

Communicating effectively is about building relationships.

Relationships determines meaning:
- It is about listening more than talking.
- It is about creating rapport with your people.
- It is about saying thank you.
- It is about providing and receiving feedback
- It is about being available when an employee wants to see you.
- It is about saying "Good Morning".
- It is about being visible, present, not locked in your office.

Communication is a process, not a product (Information needs interaction).

APPENDIX C

MAJOR FINDINGS – BEST PRACTICES

1. Managing Technology

2. Meetings

3. Orientation

4. Recognition

5. Supporting People

6. Tools

7. Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

8. Workteams

1.1 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Effective Use of Information Technology, like e-mail and BTV. – Receiving an e-mail with a direct link to a Web site included in the message; recent use of BTV with Minister and senior management sharing information on the "Caring" initiative

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

E-mail:

- directs people easily to detailed information while keeping message short
- can store address and return later for reference
- reduces priority and paper burden

BTV:

- potential not yet realized for effective internal communications.
- Great potential shown in some noteworthy applications.

Source of Information

Communications Branch, NHQ

1.2 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Quick E-mails – For example, they are useful in informing staff about why something has happened, such as the change in evacuation procedures during the recent bomb threat.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

They are a good tool if informative–can save manager time answering questions–especially in circumstances when answering the same question for many employees (e.g. Bomb threat).

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

1.3 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

The creation of the LMD Intranet site – This is more than a sharing information tool. It's a tool to help LMD staff upgrade their IT skills, including Internet/Intranet product development and knowledge, by participating in the process of the design/development and maintenance of this prototype site.

This site will also provide up-to-date information on LMD programs and services and a clear, current and concise message to all HRDC staff (everyone has access to the same information) about LMD business.

Background (How it was developed)

- At the last LMD staff retreat, staff raised several concerns around our lack of shared knowledge. The DG committed to create a forum to help share information among staff and managers. Therefore, it was decided to create an LMD Intranet site.

- To identify what type of information staff needed from this site, a working group of LMD staff (volunteers) was created. This working group provided overall guidance and LMD content to the prototype. In return, members of this group were provided with training and mentoring in the development of an Intranet site, in both technical and content aspects.

- This site, still under construction, will allow more than just information sharing. It will allow employees to directly input relevant information (about their work) on the site and continue in its development process (owned by staff). They will be able to update their telephone numbers in the LMD telephone list, complete their staff profiles (so everyone knows who does what), complete their project management forms on-line, share their best practices or join a discussion group, and a lot more.

- Although this process for sharing information and knowledge needs a bit of refinement, we see other Directorates benefiting from our process. This prototype site was designed with volunteer staff; thus, we did not necessarily have all areas of expertise represented to build the site. In the future, we would suggest that people need to compare the advantage of having volunteer staff vs. dedicated staff to get more support and expertise.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

Even in its early stages of development, this tool is in great demand because it was designed and developed by LMD staff for LMD staff. We are moving quickly forward with an official launch in June. Congratulations to the LMD working group members who were directly involved in the decision-making and development process of this site.

Source of Information

Labour Market Directorate, HRIB, NHQ
LMD Intranet site (http://intracom.hq-ac.prv/hrib-dirb/lmd-dmt)

1.4 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Receiving an e-mail with the direct link to website included in the message.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- It is now possible to add the bookmark and go back and read at leisure, and there is less paper. There is less need to search for material. The office uses e-mail to advise what's new and bookmarks establish new links.
- Offices do not use the site nearly enough because:
  1. They are not familiar with the site
  2. They do not have the time.
- This procedure saves time and reduces paper load.
- Messages are kept short and to the point.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ

1.5 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Archiving corporate messages – Corporate e-mails are captured, indexed and stored by a staff member. Messages are placed on a common drive on the team's server for later access. To date, 18 months of corporate messages have been archived in this fashion.

Background (How it got developed)

The volume of corporate e-mails can be overwhelming, yet they are often valuable sources of information. Instead of each team member fending for themselves to determine what and if such mail should be kept, a team repository of this information has been established.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach successful?

Storing and indexing the messages have created a team source of corporate information.

Source of Information

Systems, NHQ

1.6 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Buddy system for voice mail/e-mail – Update the voice mail message and make sure someone checks your voice mail and e-mail while you are away. When someone is away from the office for an extended period of time, there is a need to ensure that clients are referred to the proper source of information.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Clients are responded to.
- There is less volume when you return to work.
- Better client relations are established.
- Informal cross-functional training takes place.

Source of Information

Labour at NHQ

1.7 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

E-mail (if used properly)

Background (How it got developed)

E-mails should be divided like newspapers – by subject matter. The response was to use M il Minder of which very few people around the table were aware.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Use of Mail Minder filters unwanted e-mails, which cuts down on volume and makes the system more efficient.
- E-mail changes rules:
  - Horizontal communications – allows you to write directly to colleagues
  - Facilitates top-down/bottom-up communication ("I can write directly to the Minister")
- Information is more timely.
- There is broader distribution, which increases contacts.

Source of Information

Labour, NHQ

1.8 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Use of Intranet/Internet

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- It is possible to communicate with other government departments and community groups.
- Addresses are shared.
- ICO and Labour officers use the Internet to trace people/addresses/phone numbers.
- People can be matched to the claim.
- Labour-mail verification and hook-up to safety sites are possible.
- Information is current – no more manuals.
- The systems are used to obtain up-to-date information on software suppliers and get answers to problems.
- The systems are used for course descriptions and staff training.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk /Human Resources Training Centre

Illustrative Quotes

"Preferred way to communicate."

"Avoids headaches for Automation Coordinators as contact can be made directly with software suppliers."

"Opportunity Works -- book on conference provides recommendations and summary."

1.9 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

E-mail

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- E-mails vary from 20 to more than 80 or so per day.
- E-mail is great for distribution.
- It is accessible from other locations via RAS.
- E-mails need to be ranked according to importance. At this stage, we can only rank as regular or urgent.
- The short message in the subject block saves time.
- It is possible to group messages according to subject.
- You can reach someone if the person is not available by phone.
- Managers can have someone scan e-mails.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk /HRC Managers and Systems

Illustrative Quotes

"E-mail is great, but we tend to overuse, especially by NHQ and RHQ."

"Distribution lists need to be closely reviewed prior to sending out messages."

1.10 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Customize or configure your e-mail so that messages from certain people or groups or with certain subjects go directly to trash.

Background (How it was developed)

A lot of staff were getting messages that were not applicable to them and they felt that their e-mail was getting "cluttered" with irrelevant information. An example would be mail on "Pay Equity" – this represented only a certain group of people yet everybody in the office received all e-mails on this topic.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

It was successful because the information did not clutter the e-mail inbox. It was sitting in "trash" and it could be reviewed and read each day if wanted.

Source of Information

New Brunswick Region, National Services, Bathurst

1.11 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Use of e-mail

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- It is a very efficient and convenient way of sending information to everyone so that it reaches many people at one time.
- E-mail saves time and keeps communication lines open between employees and between offices.
- It provides quick access to up-to-date information when requesting documentation from other offices, and alleviates "playing telephone tag" or tying up phone lines.
- E-mail allows for expedience and efficiency in sending and receiving information and permits co-workers to keep each other informed.
- E-mail gives us the ability to save pertinent information.
- It provides instant access to information and the ability to contact someone even if phones are not working or a person is away from their office.
- It allows all employees to be well informed and included as part of the team and aids in making the workplace a more comfortable place to be.
- The ability to register e-mail to ensure recipient receipt of your message.

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, Cape Breton/HRCC Glace Bay

1.12 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A recently redesigned Web site has been developed which is currently the most widely used site.

Background (How it got developed)

Original site has been redesigned to become more user-friendly and transparent.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The site is validated through the highest number of "hits" in Ontario (44% of all hits; over 19,000 in one week in March).
- The site is easily accessible and transparent to users.
- Awareness of the programs has been raised considerably (confirmed through a number of focus group feedback sessions).

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

1.13 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Web site writing training; Web manager assigned for the office with representation from each unit.

Background (How it got developed)

The current project is being developed by the Insurance Project team in Belleville. There are already two I-net developers on staff.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The Web site is bilingual, demonstrated in ongoing interaction with other provinces (Quebec).
- Its use is maximized in both official languages.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

1.14 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Bookmarking materials on Web site for easier reference and distribution.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Bookmarking minimizes time required to surf the Inter/Intranet.
- It provides a handy reference.
- A listing of reports appears in one area.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

1.15 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A procedure has been established in a unit for one person to review the incoming e-mails addressed to the manager with a request to be shared with staff, to determine further distribution.

- One person reviews all incoming mail.
- This person summarizes the message and provides a short summary of any attachments/content.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Staff can decide which information is of use to them.
- Attachments are only printed once and stored in a central information area for everyone's use.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Staff/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

1.16 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

AGORA being used as a data warehousing tool, with a short summary of the newspaper clippings, etc., being provided in a widely distributed e-mail. There is an option for readers to review all articles that may be of interest to them.

Background (How it got developed)

Regional Office Communications group developed this tool and made it available to all regional staff.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The warehousing tool saves time and increases efficiency
- It reduces the frustration of having to read all information and allows people to only consult relevant information.

Other groups in the region (e.g. Financial Services) have taken advantage of this tool and made it useful for posting and distributing of their own information in a user-friendly format.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Toronto Regional Office/Focus Group with Managers

1.17 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Introduction of an upgrade to the electronic mail system was made visible; it was posted in an open area, supported by video and hands-on training. Staff were given appropriate lead time and information packages and were able to take the training at their own convenience.

Background (How it got developed)

Main contributors to the organization of the training were the regional systems group

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Both employees and management benefited from the process.
- The topic was clear and concise.
- Training was short and to the point.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Toronto Regional Office/Focus Group with Managers

Illustrative Quotes

"The training process recognized the context of the message and the needs of the audience."

1.18 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Localnet – Localnet is a computer tool that serves to organize information and make it available on a local Intranet site. An "information broker" sorts all the e-mail messages sent to a given site and sends them to predetermined folders, most of which are accessible to all employees. Thus, instead of systematically receiving all information, users can choose what they want to access, according to their interests.

Background (How it got developed)

The Montreal North HRCC set up Localnet with the support of the regional systems group. The implementation process was well organized. The management team identified it as a priority in its business plan and gave it full support.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

Localnet:

- makes it easier for employees to access information
- permits centralized processing
- reduces the volume of paper
- keeps information updated
- makes it possible to store messages and attachments in an organized way

The homepage also provides links to other sites, information on agendas and committees, and news. We already find that messages are not being recirculated or duplicated, something which tends to be a recurring problem in organizations. Seven other HRCCs have since decided to set up a Localnet in order to take control of their internal communications and more closely match information to users' real needs.

Source of Information:

Quebec Region, HRCC Montreal North

1.19 Managing Technology

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Listing of pilot projects, initiatives and best practices in Quebec Region on Quebec Region's Intranet site

http://forum.qc.prv/dips/gest_ti/proj_pil/cahier.html

It is divided into three sections:
1. human resources management
2. information, technology and physical resources management
3. service delivery.

There is a brief description of each project, along with the goal, the name of the person responsible, timetable, the people involved and expected impact. Users can add or update initiatives by contacting the resource person whose name is given at the top of the page.

The projects listed include the Localnet initiative described above and a number of streamlined procedures designed to improve service to clients.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

All these projects have potential local impact. All employees have access to this information and can build on their colleagues' experiences in their own workplace.

Source of Information

Quebec Region

2.1 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Informal meetings with managers – for example, breakfast with Branch Head or having Branch Head walk the floor and meet with people. These practices should be used more regularly.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- These meetings encourage face-to-face exchange of information.
- There is opportunity for people to bond and build relationship.
- Work of colleagues can be recognized.
- They let the people know who is coming and going.
- "Lunch & Learn" sessions were cited as good vehicles for face-to-face exchange of information that management should be encouraging people to attend.
- Immediate recognition (lunch, ticket, gift) is encouraged.
- A one-minute chat with D.G. in the hallway can be more gratifying than formal recognition.
- A personalized "thank you" note is also a worthwhile gesture.

Source of Information

Communications Branch, NHQ

2.2 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A meeting is an important form of communicating between and among groups.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

It is recognized that not all meetings are equal. Some are far more productive and effective than others. Effective meetings, however, communicate respect for the participants and impart a sense of value and accomplishment.

Productive meetings
- Create agenda
- Invite participation
- Distribute reading material ahead of time (concise information)
- Start on time
- Stay focused
- Respect viewpoint of participants
- Create minutes

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

Illustrative Quotes

"Meetings Bloody Meetings" video is a good reference tool.

2.3 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Ad hoc Meetings – Whenever information needs to be disseminated right away, a quick meeting is called to inform the staff. If one or two members are not in attendance, then other staff are either appointed or volunteer to ensure the information is shared as soon as possible.

Background (How it got developed)

In a "call centre" environment, it is extremely important that the most up-to-the-minute information is readily known and able to be shared with clients. (e.g. When there is knowledge of bomb threats).

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Employees feel supported in delivering information to the client when they are kept informed.
- increases employees' confidence; being able to do a good job increases self-gratification. It also builds "team" as employees accept responsibility for sharing information and ensuring each other are kept informed.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ, FAS Business Centre

2.4 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Networking – creating your own contacts through a more personal approach.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Personal communication develops your own integrity.
- As integrity increases so does personal power and ability to get things done.

Source of Information
FAS, NHQ

2.5 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

The establishment of regularly scheduled (twice weekly) Directors' meetings – All members give updates and then these updates are shared with staff.

Background (How it was developed)

This practice was established by the DG to ensure that all members are well informed of ongoing activities, and the future direction and planning for YID/ HRIB and Regions.

The intention is that the information shared at the meetings is delivered at individual unit meetings, therefore keeping all staff informed.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- This approach facilitates communications to staff and honours the DG's commitment to keep staff well informed.

Source of Information
HRIB, NHQ, Youth Initiatives Directorate

2.6 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Labour Market Policy weekly conference calls with the Regions and local offices.

Background (How it was developed)

In preparation for a national/regional workshop "Learning Strategies and Support and Strategic Policy", Labour Market Policy held weekly conference calls with the Regions and local offices. At the same time, there was regular correspondence by e-mail and a great deal of information was exchanged in this way. This information prepared everyone for the next conference call and allowed us to share information widely. In addition, papers were prepared for this workshop and NHQ and regional/local people served as co-authors.

A great deal of work was accomplished. The planning for the workshop, plus the thinking and writing about major policy issues, was accomplished in full partnership with the regional/local offices. This method allowed NHQ to bring in the Regions/local offices at the beginning of the policy process.

In addition, an internal Web site was created to post the papers and receive comments. It was password protected. All NHQ and regional/local participants can access the site and participate in moderated on-line discussions.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Having one person at NHQ who was responsible for the preparation, coordination and distribution of a huge volume of information every week was a key factor in the success of the initiative.
- The frequency and regularity of the conference calls were important.
- Co-operation was built at NHQ between Labour Market Policy and Learning Strategies and Support.
- The hard work, regular attendance and time commitment from everyone at NHQ and in particular from the people in the regional/local offices who were enthused, hard working and full of ideas added to its success.

Source of Information

Learning and Literacy Directorate, HRIB, NHQ

2.7 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Work unit, directorate, branch managers forum, and national working groups

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- It is the right size and right mix.
- Units of 10 to 12 staff can have effective meetings if they are informal, frequent (2 or 3 days), of short duration (20 minutes) and pertain to current issues.
- Larger, more formal meetings are held for the directorate; everyone gets the same message.

Source of Information

Income Security program, NHQ

Illustrative Quotes

"It's not always the manager who leads the meeting. This builds confidence and self-esteem within the staff."

"Managers forums are cross-branch meetings that occur once per month. The meetings are two hours with 30 minutes built in to network."

2.8 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

TEAM Brainstorming – Team brainstorming to address team tasks and respond to directives and messages from the organization

Background (How it got developed)

HRDC staff are regularly advised of new initiatives, programs and directives from the department, branch and their own Directorates. A mechanism was needed to ensure that the team understands the impact and, where necessary, could respond to these developments.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach successful?

Brainstorming offers an opportunity to develop both a common understanding and a common approach. When messages received by the team are unclear or incomplete, this can be discussed and queries sent back to the original source of the information.

Source of Information

Systems, NHQ

2.8 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Videoconferencing and Conference Calls – Use of videoconferencing and conference calls to bring together geographically dispersed team members

Background (How it got developed)

Approximately one third of Systems staff is outside NHQ. In addition, Systems delivers its services in partnership with IT staff in the regions. Videoconferencing and conference calls have become an essential tool in managing projects as they help break down the barriers imposed by geography. Many groups within Systems make use of videoconferencing/conference calls on a regularly scheduled basis.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach successful?

Though less effective than face-to-face communications, videoconferencing/ conference calls help break down geographic barriers, and in cases where teams are dispersed across the country, ensures that team members regularly share information and solutions.

Source of Information

Systems, NHQ

2.10 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Establish focus groups to deal with operational issues – An individual from each functional area sits as a SPOC on a rotation basis to represent his or her team. The group meets regularly with managers and technical advisors to resolve operational issues and workflow. The SPOC reports back to his or her team for advice and an update.

Background (How it got developed)

Several years ago, staff in offices in the Calgary area realized that there were not enough time and resources to deal with all of the operational issues. They looked for a way to get staff involved in the problem solving without impacting seriously on the operations.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Staff feel valued as they have a chance to contribute.
- The group approach provides a variety of options and opinions.
- The rotation allows all staff to participate.
- It builds teams and fosters trust.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, Calgary South HRCC

2.11 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Regular quarterly weekly meetings – Long-distance LMIA teams maintain contact mainly via e-mail and phone. Each member of the field team reports to a functional head in RHQ. They supplement their contacts with these regular quarterly weekly meetings to review best practices, network and share information.

Background (How it got developed)

Reporting relationships changed several years ago. Staff in the LMIA function felt that additional regular contacts in person were required to maintain and enhance their working relationships. The quarterly meetings have become a regular and permanent part of their workplans.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The meetings bring together long-distance teams to allow sharing, networking and building of relationships.
- A commitment from RHQ to try it and support it made it all the more successful.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, Grande Prairie HRCC

2.12 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Telephone conference call once a week, every Tuesday for one hour.

It is difficult if not impossible to maintain effective long-distance working relationships in the North. To work better together as a team of offices, they use telephone conferencing once a week every Tuesday for one hour. They provide up-to-date information for the service delivery representatives for all Alternate Delivery Sites and HRCCs. Procedures, training and information are shared. All parties have access to a P.I.N. to set up the call without an operator.

Background (How it got developed)

Every site was doing things differently. Between complaints from clients and having agents removed from offices, they had to find a way to work together and share information.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The conference call enhances networking, builds relationships, provides a better quality service and ensures consistency.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, Iqaluit HRCC, Nunavut

2.13 Meetings

Outline of "*Best Practice*"

Face-to-face communication

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- It ensures the message is delivered.
- There is immediate feedback.
- It is more personalized – develops relationships.
- They allow one to "read" body language (i.e. is person receiving/understanding message?).
- "Sometimes we should forget about technology and just talk."

Source of Information

Labour, NHQ

2.14 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Small group meetings

Background (How it was developed)

A small group of three to four people meet every day to review "Index of Labour Disputes." This is used as a reason to bring everyone together. Other issues evolve.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- The small size of the group allows good communication.
- They are informal.
- People respond to each other (more communication).
- They allow people to put a face to a name.
- Brief investment of time gives long-term results.
- They help develop support mechanisms through camaraderie which fosters risk taking (which sometimes is as little as stating your opinion).
- New people are inducted into the "team."
- The groups allow allow people to become oriented to different programs/activities and how they fit into the organization.
- They provide informal training.

Source of Information

Labour at NHQ

2.15 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Regular meetings

Background (How it was developed)

Staff need to be kept up to date on office issues.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Labour brings in outside speakers.
- In ICO, staff research their own questions and share with the group. It puts the onus on individual staff members.
- Roundtable discussion gives everyone a chance to share ideas and to participate. We get information that we would not receive if there were a formal meeting with a "chair" delivering a set agenda.
- They work because they are held regularly and on paydays. It seems that most people are there that day. It is held at 8:00 a.m. to allow people who are travelling or working front end, attending other meetings, etc., to still participate. They are never cancelled even though management may not be in attendance.
- They recognize special events/personal milestones.
- Larger offices can have separate unit meetings.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk, HRC Managers

Illustrative Quotes

"It's the oldest communication method, but we don't always do it."

2.16 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Automation Coordinator's (A/C) monthly conference call

- They are hosted by Regional office systems.
- They provide A/Cs with updates, new installation plans and problem solving.
- They run in a roundtable format.

Background (How it was developed)

- Originally, quarterly meetings were planned. However, the meetings did not occur regularly.
- Some time frames could not be met due to conflicting priorities.
- Some A/Cs were duplicating their efforts, and were not all working on the same priorities.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- There is advanced notice of planned releases.
- They save time.
- They are a trouble-shooting tool.
- They are a planning tool which helps prioritize and organize work.
- They allow A/Cs to network and, as a result, they do not feel isolated.
- Sharing of best practices within the Region is possible.
- Managers are made aware of priorities, impact on overtime and system shut-down, etc.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Team North, Automation Coordinators

Illustrative Quotes

"Major time saver, as Automation Coordinators are not reinventing the wheel."

2.17 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Weekly EI conference calls with Case Processing Unit (CPU)

Background (How it was developed)

- EI Claims were centralized to two main processing centres within Manitoba Region.
- Carmelle Bernard, who is known for assisting offices with their EI processes, did a review of the Brandon CPU.
- One of the observations was that consistency was needed at the front end so the Claims Processing Section of the CPU could run more efficiently.
- The objective was to meet/exceed targets and standards of service.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Front-end file-processing procedures were made more efficient and consistent.
- Questions were raised.
- Overall participation is great.
- PLOs sit in on calls along with ISAs – there is direct contact with processing unit.
- They provide training and guidance.
- Approximately 40 to 50 people attend, including Regional Office.
- A challenge is more discussions between offices (a roundtable discussion is a possibility).
- They provide an opportunity to communicate weekly.
- They provide an opportunity to hear the message at the same time that everyone else does.
- Offices are not singled out (i.e. errors).
- Corrective action can be taken immediately.
- Explanations behind decisions or procedural changes are given.
- The regional "big picture" is explained.
- Issues are brought up in a timely fashion.
- A weekly report is produced as a follow-up.
- All offices have input to the agenda.
- Time is limited to only 20 to 30 minutes.
- The call is completed by the time the front doors are opened. As a result, there is no disruption to clients.
- They provide a quick way of addressing issues and backlog is identified.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Team South

All offices whose EI files are processed at Brandon CPU

Illustrative Quotes

"This eliminates blame, as we are all in this together."

2.18 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

CPC/HRC conference calls

- All front-end staff attend.
- The call occurs before clients come into the office.
- They last 30 to 40 minutes.
- Operational issues are discussed.
- Agenda item and roundtable discussion takes place.

Background (How it was developed)

- An effective method was required to advise HRCs of EI processing concerns.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- There is sharing of information, such as backlogs and statistics.
- This office shares information with CPC Labour market information.
- Everyone feels part of the process.
- Minutes are sent out afterwards.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk

2.19 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Sharing Circle

Background (How it was developed)

- A way was needed to discuss business and non-business issues that may have created barriers.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Staff and community become comfortable with one another.
- Work and personal issues are discussed.
- There is openness between people.
- There is building of trust which relates to improved working relationships.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk/Aboriginal Single Window Office

Illustrative Quotes

"Trusting circle" – "Confidential and comforting."

2.20 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Northern Zone Employment Counsellor's Network – The employment counsellors in the zone have formed a network to share ideas, tools and practices internally. This group communicates by e-mail. They also have implemented and attended a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) program as a group that 5 out of 14 counsellors attended. Another counsellor, J. Creighton attended a previous PLA program and helped facilitate the recent one. Various information has been shared through our e-mail list and at meetings.

Background (How it got developed)

This network got its start at a counseling conference in Fredericton in 1996. It happened that six or seven counsellors from our zone travelled together in a van to attend it. We realized that we benefited not only from the conference but from the time spent together travelling. As usually happens, there was a lot of "shop talk" and the sharing of information was a great learning experience. We felt that we needed to get together like this periodically. This happened to a certain extent during the MOD courses, but as most of us had completed this training, we no longer had the opportunity to meet any more.

Shortly after this, one of the counsellors involved with the Learning Committee brought up the idea of setting up a counsellor network in the zone. The managers fully supported this idea.

The Learning Committee and manager's group noted the resulting sharing of information and enthusiasm generated. They encouraged the counsellors to form a network. After various discussions, e-mails and emerging issues, we held our first official meeting on June 29, 1998. We have continued to meet regularly since then and share information by e-mail between meetings.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Coming together, physically in one room, on a periodic basis is most effective. Communication via technology (e.g. e-mail, conference calls etc.) has merit, but face-to-face communication is the best for quality communication.
- An e-mail list, meeting regularly and knowing each other better help us share information and ideas. We also can then consult with each other better about common client problems.
- It's quick, all inclusive, in a language that we understand, pertinent only to counsellors, usually positive, and timely.
- As counsellors, effective communications are our business. Keeping that in mind, no form of communication meets our needs better than through a network such as ours that meets regularly to exchange ideas/concepts/ practices. We're not just exchanging information here; if that were the case, technology and other traditional sources would be able to meet our needs.
- It helps us keep up-to-date with issues that affect us, it makes it easier for managers and others to get counsellor input when appropriate, and makes communication easier and better.
- It includes all the counsellors, so it is an easy way to get ideas or information

to our counterparts.

- A sense of a pressing need to take a proactive leadership role in the unfolding and the operationalizing of the HRDC vision has kindled this particular process.
- The support and encouragement of the management team and the counsellors help us to work toward the betterment of all.
- We are all friends as well as co-workers. Everyone/anyone can use the network to relay information, etc.

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, Northern Zone Employment Counsellor Network

Illustrative Quotes

"The network has been a very satisfying experience, one of the most empowering since I have been with HRDC. There are many reasons for the network's success, but a main one is that it is employee-driven. It was our idea, and we do this because we want to, not because our managers have told us to do this. We decide what we want to discuss, when we want to meet, etc. The second reason for its success is the group itself. The counsellors in this zone have many years of combined experience and education and have all received the MOD training. It is a wonderful group to work with, very warm and supportive."

"Our offices are all different and it is good to compare notes and see how others approach certain issues. The other bonus is that I feel that we have a real voice now as a group of professionals within the department."

"If I am puzzled by something, or want an opinion, I can just pick up the phone or E-mail someone for advice."

"One of the counsellors has a friend who is a counsellor with HRDC in Newfoundland. She was so impressed by our network that she is trying to set one up in her area."

"It helps communication, and acts as a stimulus for professional development and continuous learning. It helps the organization move forward in these areas and provides a good sounding board for service delivery issues."

2.21 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

"*Rotational Chair*" for Learning Committee meetings

Background (How it got developed)

This practice began about three years ago.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- When the chair is rotated, you get different approaches and perspectives to the tasks you are trying to accomplish.
- Rotational Chairs give experience and confidence to those who otherwise might not have the opportunity.
- It is a voluntary process.
- If a co-worker is "chairing" a committee or meeting, he or she feels able to express his or her views more openly.
- Staff feel that their opinion will be respected.
- Working in teams helps promote a healthy working environment.
- The practice helps staff to communicate better.
- The rotating Chair asks for items before meetings which gives others time to consider any items they wish included.
- The Rotating Chair keeps things fresh and the same person is not "saddled" with it on a regular basis.
- It prompts a general willingness to be open and trusting when discussion occurs (whether positive or negative).

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, Cape Breton/ HRCC Glace Bay

2.22 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Bi-weekly regular meetings for managers and staff

Background (How it got developed)

This practice began about three years ago.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Regular meetings give everyone an opportunity to participate and to be kept up-to-date, in discussing work plans, workloads and specific cases or new developments.
- They offer an avenue to share ideas and concerns. Any changes to help perform our work more effectively are discussed and problems are dealt with.
- Everyone on the committee must feel he or she is an equal and effective member and staff feel informed.
- Agendas are used and staff feels free to discuss whatever they want as it relates to how they function as a department.
- Meeting as a group on occasion offers the opportunity to familiarize us with others and to understand their roles and responsibilities and how everyone contributes to the department.
- They allow for a different perspective on issues than if the meetings were management driven.
- They make staff feel that they are making a contribution.
- There are sometimes inconsistencies in the structure of the meeting.
- Having regular meetings avoids holding other, unnecessary meetings.

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, Cape Breton/ HRCC Glace Bay

2.23 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Zone Union/Management Committee (ZUMC) – Regular Zone Union/ Management meetings are followed up by minutes and circulated and posted on the Northern Zone Intranet site. The meetings are co-chaired by a management and a union representative.

Background (How it got developed)

The ZUMC committee evolved from the original Zone Work Force Adjustment committee in 1997.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Issues such as staffing, budgeting, etc., that cannot be finalized at the local office level due to zone implications can be dealt with at this medium. Normally, all managers plus the director are present with the union representatives so a whole picture is seen, not just a frame.
- It's an opportunity to discuss and resolve difficult issues before they become larger issues.
- Questions can be asked directly to management via the union representative and normally issues are resolved and/or explained without undue delay.
- Staff like to feel issues are being handled and a forum like the ZUMC is available to allow these issues to be raised and discussed.
- Having staffing reports and minutes ahead of scheduled meetings is important so that we can prepare an effective agenda to deal with any issues. It also allows one to gather any necessary data or information needed.
- Everything gets posted to the Intranet site under committees in the Northern Zone. Members are free to have input to the agenda and to add to the agenda at the meetings. All material is available to all employees to read if they choose in an open and transparent process.
- At times, issues are brought up that are not issues for that committee because they can be handled at a local UMC committee meeting, and often are referred back to that meeting. As well, at times some actions can be slowed (i.e. competitive processes due to input from the committee) and this can be frustrating; however, it can also be positive because the input is often valuable and can save time in explaining the process.

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, Northern Zone

Illustrative Quotes

"When your manager or co-worker uses this practice, how does it make you feel? Great! (like Tony the Tiger)"

"Initially, some issues may make you feel uncomfortable because they are sensitive, but the exchange of information is a good and honest exchange. Although the discussion is between and among members of two groups that represent particular interests, there is strength in the group discussion and raising the difficult issues is made easier through this forum."

2.24 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A weekly conference call between the Insurance Service Advisor (ISA), Service Delivery Representatives (SDR) from each HRC in the zone and a representative from the Nova Scotia Employment Insurance Telecentre (EIT)

Background (How it got developed)

- In 1996, offices were facing a number of major changes due to new EI legislation. A system was required in order to keep the SDRs up-to-date.
- One of the ISAs (Janet Skiba) saw this need and started sending weekly e-mails to update the front-end staff.
- In addition, the ISA then visited each office on a monthly basis to discuss the changes and address any concerns.
- After a period of time, it was decided the individual office meetings were not effective. Issues would be discussed in one office and it was difficult to share this with other offices.
- In September 1998, a weekly conference call was initiated to address some of the problems.
- The ISA initiates the call. At least one SDR from each office and a representative from the EIT participate with the ISA.
- This happens every Wednesday from 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. Minutes are recorded

and distributed to all SDRs, the Insurance Unit and the EIT.

- A monthly meeting evolved to specifically discuss "best practices" in each office. The meeting occurs immediately after the conference call, with a representative from each office. Minutes are distributed via e-mail.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The meetings are timely and they occur on a weekly basis.
- Everyone gets the same information at the same time. You have a chance to clarify the information.
- The SDRs feel they have a chance to have input into the way things are done. They have the authority to make decisions on the spot. They can solve their own problems.
- Lines of communication are strengthened between each office, the EIT and the Central Insurance Processing Unit. This method allows for two-way communication.
- They help staff stay on top of things before errors become habits–nip it in the bud. They also allow for feedback from various sources before decisions are made.
- People like this practice because it allows them to participate and feel they have some control over their work and how it is done.
- Networks are developed and as a result better interaction occurs. They don't feel out there on their own. They're part of a bigger team and work together to get the job done. They feel supported.
- People are able to solve issues before they become big problems. The meetings are a good learning tool. Questions can be answered on the spot.
- This practice makes them feel as if their input counts. They have input into the decision. They are trusted to make the right decision. They feel supported, connected to the bigger team. There is pride in doing a good job.
- The leadership comes from within the group. There is a real sense of commitment from those involved.
- Participation rotates so no one feels left out.
- The call occurs between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m. before most offices open to the public.
- The offices are driven by quality service. The call is only 1/2 hour and this helps keep people focused.

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, HRCC Halifax

2.25 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Weekly staff meetings chaired and run by staff

Background (How it got developed)

The practice began in January 1999. It grew out of team building. Team building helped formalize this process. The addition of a new manager (November 1998) helped the process evolve.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Agenda items are solicited from all staff and sent out ahead of time so staff can prepare for the meeting. It also indicates who will present what topic, thus reminding staff to be prepared.
- Everyone is asked to bring their agenda book with them in case it is required to book other meetings need to be booked.
- These are timely meetings that occur on a weekly basis. This allows everyone to get the same information at the same time.
- The Chair and minute taker are rotated. Minutes are distributed via e-mail so a record is kept of what was decided. This is helpful for anyone that is not able to attend.
- A round table occurs at the beginning of every meeting.
- Chairing the meeting or taking minutes helps staff develop meeting skills. No one person is responsible to make sure things happen. The round table helps other staff have a better understanding of what each person has on his or her agenda. This strengthens relationships (humanizes it).
- This form of communication fits with our team practice.
- Knowledge of what is happening allows people to be acknowledged and feel appreciated for what they do. This also gains respect for/from colleagues. As a result people are more understanding of how we react in times of stress. This increases our comfort level with each other.
- People recognize the need and value of the meeting. Beginning with the round table helps creates the feeling of a real staff meeting.
- Knowing what each other is doing allows us to address capacity issues.
- The meetings helps people understand what is going on in other people's work life and their understanding helps people feel supported. It creates a "warm and fuzzy" feeling. It starts the week off on the right foot. It helps you keep your commitment when you see others doing the same thing. It creates

better understanding of who is responsible for what and when.

- It is staff driven and staff participate in the meeting and set the agenda. Everyone is expected to participate. The responsibilities are shared. There is a team commitment to meet regularly.
- The meeting takes place with/without manager. It seems to works in a small office/group (9-12). It appears to be needs driven.
- The 9:00 a.m. office opening allows 1/2 hour for full staff participation. Staff rotate covering the front end of the office. Minutes are distributed in a timely manner. The schedule indicating the chair and scribe are posted.
- This practice could work in a small office or unit (less than 12). It will be successful only if staff manage it and commitment is made by all. The office hours and cover can impact on the success.

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, HRCC Windsor

2.26 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Weekly Meetings of the Investigation and Control Unit to Discuss Priorities

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Other units are invited to meetings.
- Information is shared with all stakeholders.
- Record of decisions is kept and distributed to all potentially affected areas.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/ Belleville Sub-Regional Office

2.27 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Client Response Centres have regular monthly staff meetings **to discuss priorities, values and goals, and to help staff cope with change.**

Background (How it got developed)

The success of past meetings has necessitated the planning of these meetings a year in advance.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Experiences from various presentations/workshops are shared ("Moving On/Moving Forward").
- The meetings provide two-way communications.
- They work well and have been found to be needed on a monthly basis.
- They help staff to share common goals.
- They help staff to cope with change.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Staff/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

2.28 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Quarterly all-staff off-site meetings **with the Director of the HRCC to share information and get input from staff**

Background (How it got developed)

Management recognized the need for regular interaction and for sharing of information and soliciting staff ideas, suggestions and concerns.

These staff meetings work because front-end offices get help from other area offices to ensure uninterrupted business and service to clients, while allowing all staff to participate.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Staff's need to interact are being met face-to-face.
- Information is being shared regularly, is consistent, and everyone gets it at the same time.
- Performance has improved.
- Morale is better.
- Organization has stabilized.
- Decisions made at the meeting are followed through (by e-mail).

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Managers

Illustrative Quotes

"It is important for staff to know what the management expectations of them are, as it is important for the management to be aware of what the staff expect from them."
"Communications can make or break an operation."
"Not only the method of delivery, but the message is also important."
"Communications is not an entity that can exist in isolation."

2.29 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Teleconference calls for the offices in the greater Toronto area to communicate, share information (on business developments, performance), build rapport and discuss workload management and budgets. Some decisions are also made during these calls and minutes of discussions are taken.

Background (How it got developed)

Calls have been arranged every Monday for the past two years.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- There's more exchange of information.
- There is more mutual ongoing support among offices.
- Better workload distribution among offices is occurring as well as sharing of overtime.
- This is an effective process.
- Informal decisions are being made at the local office manager level.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Managers

2.30 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Stand-up informal unit meetings to strategize for the upcoming week

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Meetings later in the day result in more decisions being made.
- Procrastination is avoided.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Managers

2.31 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Regular face-to-face staff meetings **to address various issues with minutes produced for the benefit of interested parties who may not have attended the meeting.**

Background (How it got developed)

Recognition by both staff and management that face-to-face communication is required on a regular basis resulted in these meetings.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The meeting provides meaningful feedback and opportunity for staff to provide ideas of their own.
- They establishes communicator's credibility.
- There is consistency and timeliness of information – all staff get the same information at the same time.
- Minutes/information is available for reference after the meeting.
- They make participants more accountable for their actions after the meeting,

for any decisions or actions required that are identified in the meeting.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Toronto Regional Office/Focus Group with Managers

Illustrative Quotes

"Technology cannot replace face-to-face interaction."

2.32 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

"Monday Morning Update" teleconference – Teleconference Monday mornings with all areas represented to share hot issues and updates on important priorities

Background (How it got developed)

The DG of a program area initiated the practice.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The teleconferences ensure that information is given to all affected areas.
- They increase operational efficiency, and is cost-efficient.
- They are a faster process than communicating individually.
- They encourage decision-making and identified actions for all areas involved.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Toronto Regional Office/Focus Group with Managers

2.33 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Regular unit meetings to debrief each other on each other's portfolios/priorities and on learnings from training courses/conferences/workshops.

Background (How it got developed)

Regular meetings have been established to share information.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- These meetings are an efficient and time-saving practice.
- It is important for others to know what you do.
- New employees benefit from practice.
- All learnings are shared.
- Staff are committed to share information from training courses and conferences.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Regional Office/Focus Group with Managers

2.34 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Staff and management have regular communication.
- The office has regular staff meetings and workteam meetings.
- Minutes are kept of the meetings.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Workshop meetings expand participation and provide for wider sharing of information.
- The regularity of communication has improved very much over the past two years.
- There are now a number of mechanisms in place to ensure regular communications.
- Staff are encouraged to bring up issues as they arise.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound, Meeting with Managers and Staff

2.35 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Staff have all the internal communications they require.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- There is more face-to-face communication among staff and with the management.
- Other means of communications are also available and are being used more.
- The office management is exercising a more open-door policy, encouraging more communication.

Source of Information
Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

2.36 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Cluster meetings between the HRCC and its satellite offices

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Meetings are very useful to address common issues.
- Information is shared at the same time.
- Sub-committees have been established to address specific issues that arise from these cluster meetings.
- Best practices are shared (showcase, "communications backboard") and brought back to be used in the participants' own workplace.
- They allow all participants to see the "bigger picture."
- The meetings are also cost-efficient.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

2.37 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

1. Increased frequency of all types of meetings with staff – Including general staff meetings, management/supervisory, union/management, health and safety, and unit meetings. These meetings have become more structured with agenda items and records of decisions or minutes distributed outlining follow-up or action items required.

2. Emails to all staff to explain staffing or organizational decisions in one unit that might impact people outside that unit, including timing of various competitions.

3. Tools introduced to improve our ability to communicate with each other – Name tags, creating an office phone list by functional unit.
4. Rewards and Recognition Events – Several events were undertaken over

the past year. The purpose of the events varied from long-service events, to events recognizing performance results, to events marking the implementation of the Labour Market Development Agreement.

5. Functional units were encouraged to bring forward their mandate to all staff during our general staff meetings.

Background (How it was developed)

- All of the above-mentioned best practices were developed in response to the North Saskatchewan results of the 1996 Assessing the Environment survey. After the results were reviewed, the management team established several priority areas for improvement, one of which was communications.
- The above-mentioned best practices were introduced to facilitate the communication processes in the area. The practices outlined here continue to be used in the Saskatoon HRCC. The Saskatoon HRCC is the main office in the North Saskatchewan HRCC area. The office consists of three areas – income support, corporate services and human resource investment programming. The number of staff ranges from 130 to 150. Since the number of staff is quite large, communication processes needed to be streamlined and coordinated between units.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

1. **Increased frequency of meetings** – Everyone had the opportunity to hear the same information at the same time; as a result, misunderstanding and miscommunications tend to be reduced. In some cases, such as union/ management and supervisor/management meetings, potential staffing actions are reviewed prior to implementing or announcing to staff, resulting in stronger relationships between the union and management. Also, over the course of the past year, Regional Office staff have visited the office to discuss situations/ initiatives that are areas of greatest change, including pre- and post-Labour Market Development Agreements, La Relève and personal development or learning plans.

2. **Emails to staff outlining staffing or organizational decisions** have empowered individuals to approach their manager or supervisor to discuss any issues. Staff rely less on rumors and feel empowered to discuss with their manager or supervisor.

3. **Tools to improve our ability to communicate with each other**. Both nametags and the functional unit phone list have helped staff to get to know

other staff members in the office, thereby strengthening the relationships between units and individuals in the office. Staff members display more confidence in approaching other staff members if they know who they are and in which unit they work.

4. **Rewards and recognition events,** such as those to acknowledge the performance results from the previous fiscal year, enable staff to celebrate our achievements and increase their sense of pride in a job well done.

5. **Functional units providing information to all staff on their mandate and priorities** increased units' knowledge and appreciation for other units. Another successful item was the increased visibility for the unit in the office. Staff members were more apt to approach those units after the presentations, as they felt more comfortable.

Source of Information

Saskatchewan Region, North Saskatchewan and Saskatoon HRCC managers.

2.38 Meetings

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Focus Groups have been found to be particularly effective for special purposes (e.g. discussion of leadership development). A variation of this technique is the **special purpose meeting** – a meeting with a pre-determined time limit (20 minutes) and a single topic.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

This practice has been found to be particularly effective since it removes people from there everyday duties for a period of time, allows them to set aside their ongoing responsibilities and to concentrate on one particular subject. The ideas tend to flow and constructive interchange of ideas occurs.

Source of Information
Saskatchewan Region

3.1 Orientation

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Orientation Sessions – New employees need information about the organizational environment.

Background (How it got developed)

In the past, a five day orientation session was given by EIC to give new employees an overall view of the whole department.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- This session gives new employees a sense of belonging.
- If the new employee needs to interact with a specific group, at least he or she has one contact name to contact.
- It increases confidence at being able to function in new environment.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

3.2 Orientation

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

I&C Welcome Booklet for new employees – *Welcome to Investigation and Control Directorate*

The booklet includes: Introduction from DG to welcome new employees, information about the I&C organization, what is important, a glossary of I&C terms, and a list of Regional Desk Officers (RDOs).

Background (How it was developed)

It was developed by the CONCEP group, an employee group in I&C.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

New employees find it effective. It is helpful in getting the lay out and tone of the I&C group. This comes through in the booklet. It does not replace personal interaction with new employees, but it provides a "flavour" of the group, our culture. We enjoy working together and we enjoy each other. There are about 60 in the I&C group.

Information of this sort must come down from management.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ, Investigation and Control Directorate

Illustrative Quotes

"New employees are encouraged to interact with their colleagues in I&C from the get go."

3.3 Orientation

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Orientation meetings for new staff – Orientation meetings are held for new staff when they join the Branch to advise them of the Branch's business, people and priorities.

Background (How it got developed)

In response to concerns that students coming to work for Systems Branch were not always properly welcomed, Systems launched the practice of orientation sessions. Each new group of students meets the senior management team. Managers explain the responsibilities of their directorates and welcome the students. The students are advised of Systems' priorities and projects. These meetings have proven highly successful and are becoming a practice to welcome all new staff to Systems, not just students.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach successful?

A face-to-face meeting between managers and new staff communicates a strong welcoming message to new employees. This approach is effective in ensuring that new staff understand the Branch and know where to find the information they need.

Source of Information

Systems, NHQ

3.4 Orientation

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Mentoring – New staff are assigned a mentor to respond to their queries; act as a sounding board.

Background (How it was developed)

New employees were brought on without ample resources to train them properly.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- This practice spreads workload for training.
- Mentoring develops relationships.
- It provides an opportunity to share history/organizational culture.
- Knowledge and skills can be shared.

Source of Information

Labour at NHQ

3.5 Orientation

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Orientation program for new employees to introduce the organization (organizational structure and objectives) and to allow employees to get an overview of the operations, first in one-on-one sessions, and then within a unit environment

Background (How it got developed)

- Management recognized the need for better and more effective introduction of new employees to the organization.
- In addition to oral overviews and comprehensive written material, training videos were also developed (e.g. Board of Referee training videos, videos on appeals process).

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Staff move easier and better around different working areas.
- They gain better appreciation of how different work groups operate.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/ Belleville Sub-Regional Office

4.1 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

HRDC five-year anniversary

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

It was a good review of what we managed to achieve together.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ

4.2 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

All Insurance employees who have worked 25 years in the Public Service receive a Birks watch. Everyone who has received it to date wears it and likes it. Some people just get coffee cups!

Background (How it was developed)

The practice started when Noreen Smith was the ADM. It is not clear if it will continue with the new ADM, John Knubley.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

The cost of the watch is paid for from the ADM's budget. It is not a manager's budget so it is not an issue of whether or not the manager has the money. Employees get the feeling that somebody cares; it is a good watch, not "Mickey Mouse." Used to receive a "lead slug" – what do you do with this black coin in a velvet box?

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ

4.3 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Personal, informal appreciation, such as a pat on the back from your immediate supervisor is the most appreciated form of recognition.

A pizza day is held to celebrate special events.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

"Our culture is not to toot our own horn. We have noticed that managers are becoming more innovative in finding ways of supporting people."

"We have a monthly award called 'ABC Award' which stands for "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty.'" Everyone gets to nominate someone who has performed an exceptional service during the past month. If people do not have the feeling that something exceptional occurred, it is not necessary to fill out the ballot."

Source of Information

Income Security program, NHQ

4.4 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Set up an appreciation team – It includes participation from provincial on site partners and HRCC staff.

The team shows peer recognition each month for three categories:
- random acts of kindness
- helping out
- honorable mention (doing a great job).

Background (How it got developed)

The office was looking for ways to improve morale in the Can/Alberta Service Centre, bring staff together, show recognition and reward those individuals.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The appreciation team makes staff feel valued, builds relationships within HRDC and with our partners, and gives staff a chance to nominate their co-workers. They make everyone feel good.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, Lethbridge HRCC

4.5 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

"Tim Horton Moments"

Background (How it was developed)

There were informal celebrations for birthdays (e.g. also informal group activities such as golf, lunch, breakfast).

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- They are fun days to break down barriers, build relationships.
- It is important to tell people that they are doing a good job.

Source of Information

Labour. NHQ

4.6 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Rewards Program – recognize contributions of employees

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- "You need to have the right psychological currency" (i.e. reward has to be meaningful to recipient – give employee a catalogue to pick out gift).
- It needs to be in front of colleagues.
- It needs to be timely – not six months after the fact.

Source of Information

Labour, NHQ

4.7 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Don't forget to give staff recognition for a job well done – this can be as simple and basic as "thanks, you did a great job."

Background (How it was developed)

One participant told a story about how her immediate manager gave out little cards with words of appreciation on them and how effective they were for staff.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

People do not need a lot but a small token of recognition can go a long way.

Source of Information

New Brunswick Region

4.8 Recognition

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Biannual awards and recognition breakfasts

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- These social gatherings allow staff to interact in informal settings.
- They provide an opportunity to reward, recognize and share staff efforts.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Managers

5.1 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Branch All Staff Retreat

Background (How it got developed)

Held annually in two days in Ottawa to bring together staff from NHQ and regions.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Everyone gets a chance to know each other, from other divisions at NHQ and from regions.
- It encourages face-to-face information sharing.
- Opportunity is provided for learning workshops and guest speakers.
- More frequent Branch meeting would help to keep people informed and be a means to meet new staff from other divisions.
- Half-day retreat at the unit level is encouraged for team building.

Source of Information

Communications Branch, NHQ

5.2 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

National-Regional Conferences

Background (How it got developed)

Whenever a conference involving regional managers and NHQ management was held in NHQ, there was a standing offer for officers to attend. Employees indicated the need to do more of this, and that more of them should become involved to help establish broader working relationships.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

The conferences provide an opportunity to meet regional colleagues and hear feedback on particular files the officer may be working on.

Source of Information

Communications Branch, NHQ

5.3 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Social events – Social committee organized activities to encourage staff interaction outside work environment, and to help boost morale.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Team building and working relationships develop.
- Some activities also serve the purpose of raising funds for the United Way.
- People are not forced to attend if they are not interested.
- The practice could be enhanced with more unit gatherings (i.e. team building).

Source of Information

Communications Branch, NHQ

5.4 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Supporting and Encouraging Employees – Providing one-on-one support to each employee enables better job performance. Support includes the tools and resources to do the job effectively.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- One-on-one support demonstrates trust and encourages the employee to take risks without fear of reprisal.
- Support increases employee's confidence.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ, FAS Business Centre

5.5 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Staff retreats work very well – About once a year, everyone gets a chance to know each other. Each Directorate has its own retreat. Smaller groups bring in guest(s) from other branches to bridge the gap, remove the blinders between groups.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Retreats build better communication and update staff about the latest developments and new directions.
- A special time is allotted for administrative staff to ask questions because they may be out of day-to-day loop.
- There is a lot of team building.
- They are an ideal way of getting updates from outside groups...from the horse's mouth. Bringing in regional people to share creates awareness of each other's environment and provides a report card from the regions. Regional presentation is based on feedback from regional staff and interactions with NHQ.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ

5.6 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

National assignment opportunities for regional staff and NHQ employees going to the region

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- This two-way sharing of information has worked well in the past.
- This practice provides the opportunity to work on a specific task group and the ability to influence the product that's going back to the region.
- It provides first-hand experience in understanding the obstacles of working at NHQ. There is more awareness of all the process involved in making change.
- Employees gain patience and understanding of the NHQ environment.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ

Illustrative Quotes

"As end user of a product coming into NHQ, it helped me appreciate and learn about the other side of the business."

5.7 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Branch and Directorate Social Events

Branch BBQ; Branch Christmas party; Directorate pot-luck lunches (Impromptu)

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- These events bring staff together in an informal, fun atmosphere that builds relationships.

Source of Information

Income Security program, NHQ

Illustrative Quotes

"These events give us a chance to get to know each other outside work."

"Each directorate formed a baseball team. Baseball games were played at lunch time. Two finalists emerged and the final was held during the BBQ."

"At the Christmas party, a lot of people stayed late. The ADM danced with everyone he could. It was a great feeling."

"Someone suggested we have a pot-luck. We held it in the boardroom and took an hour for lunch instead of the usual 30 minutes. Everyone contributed."

5.8 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Full staff retreats outside the office (1 to 4 days)

Background (How it was developed)

Supporting People initiative:
- Southwest HRC
- FAS
- Systems
- Labour
- Human Resource Services
- Programs and Operations
- Aboriginal Single Window
- ICOs in Winnipeg CPC, Brandon and Selkirk

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- They are held offsite so there are no interruptions.
- They are not "all work" workshops – there are opportunities for enjoyment.
- They are useful for team building and getting to know colleagues.
- They create a "vision" for the office.
- Outside consultants are used to teach staff how to balance work and personal life.
- They provide an opportunity to manage risk workshops with ICOs.
- ICOs needed to get focused.
- The Systems group created a vision as well as discussions on work-related issues/visioning.
- Systems group created follow-up teams to ensure that issues were addressed.
- They create equal opportunities for everyone to speak and are useful for support staff.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk, HRC Managers

5.9 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Expert user – Lead person for one issue

Background (How it was developed)

We needed to develop a leader in specialized areas (i.e. Foreign Worker/Youth Initiatives)

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- It helps to develop subject area specialists locally.
- The practice is a staff development opportunity.
- Staff are more familiar with the subject and outside contacts/other government departments (ICO).

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk

5.10 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Workshops and conferences

Background (How it was developed)

- ICO is usually done yearly, in order to discuss targets, review previous year results and address issues and concerns.
- RHQ coordinates (e.g. ICO).
- Middle manager's workshop took place in Hechla.
- Visioning presentations were made by Marilyn Hay and Lee Quesnel.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

ICO Workshop:
- The same message was delivered to all staff.
- The agenda items come from offices.
- Guest speakers provide outside input.
- Contacts are made from other parts of the region.
- They provide an opportunity for team building.

Conferences: (Opportunity Works)
- The national conference provides an opportunity for employees across the country to network.
- They help to communicate new practices/information from across Canada.
- Guest speakers provide outside input.
- Commitment by the Minister is visible to all participants.
- They provide an opportunity for good participation and varied experiences.
- A variety of attendees – such as project officers/managers/projects/participants/third-party providers – provides interest.
- Best practices are championed.

Visioning presentations by Marilyn Hay and Lee Quesnel
- They gave a clear picture of the direction of the department.
- There is visibility of the Director General.
- Supporting People initiative is put into action.

Source of Information

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk

Illustrative Quotes

"Very successful. Opportunity Works was one of the best conferences on this topic."

5.11 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Annual workshop with representation from all functional groups

Background (How it got developed)

A workshop was determined to be the best way to get everyone together at least once a year to share information, to network and to learn together. It was developed from several smaller workshops, rolled up into an all-Ontario workshop.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The workshop works extremely well.
- Information is shared and filtered through the management/staff ranks.
- It represents a collaborative effort between operations and regional management.
- Participants benefit from NHQ management presence and presentations, followed by questions and answers.
- Workshop is held off site, allowing people to interact and network outside their work environment.
- Feedback to organizers has been very positive and encourages future workshops of this nature.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

5.12 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Partnering with ISP on mutual areas of interest

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The practice provides more and better horizontal communications.
- Staff secondments between programs are practised, providing opportunity for expansion of knowledge and experience.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

5.13 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Off-site management retreats for self-evaluation

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The retreats provide an opportunity for managers to do a self-evaluation.
- They include operational planning, budgeting and HR planning.
- They address "coping with change"
- Some information is subsequently shared with staff in the individual managers' units.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

5.14 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A workshop for all Investigation and Control staff – Workshop are held off site to share information, best practices and to allow staff to network.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Feedback from staff is very positive.
- The workshops provide opportunity for face-to-face networking.
- They promotes harmonization with partners, who participate in the workshops
- They encourages mutual support.
- The workshops have raised staff morale
- These conferences are very cost-effective (practices are shared and then implemented).

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Staff/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

Illustrative Quotes

"*The sessions profit the organization a thousand-fold.*"

5.15 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Building Better Teams Event for Insurance Program staff – "True Colours" tool is used to help staff identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Background (How it got developed)

Workshops were established off site with the help of consultants. These events are planned for as part of the planning process.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The event allows people to recognize, acknowledge and accept their differences in a team setting and how to use these differences effectively.
- It enhances internal communications and ensures staff's mutual appreciation of each other.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Managers

5.16 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

PM-2 Toolkit Regional Workshop (to build employment services throughout Ontario

Background (How it got developed)

RHQ Employment Services developed the tool.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The workshop provided for a lot of information sharing and networking.
- It was well facilitated, and some of the issues raised were addressed immediately.
- The workshop was held off site, and it encouraged feedback.
- It was very open, positive and visible.
- There was a complimentary lunch, allowing for more time for networking and sharing of best practices, with a speaker to open the session and address the issues raised earlier in the day.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Staff

Illustrative Quotes

"One of the best workshops I've attended in the 18 years with HRDC."

5.17 Supporting People

Outline of "*Best Practice*"

Staff conference away from the office, as well as Directorate/Branch all staff forums with guest speakers and participants from across Canada, and other opportunities to participate in the organization of conferences, "think-tanks," consultations, etc. Annual "wellness fairs" with employee involvement from Public Works and DND.

Background (How it got developed)

- Recent all-directorate staff days keep communications and learning ongoing (one day was dedicated to awards and recognition).
- All-staff learning forums were developed
- La Relève consultations with all levels of staff were held

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- It allowed active staff participation in organizing the events.
- It offers a successful networking tool and provides opportunities to meet colleagues you work with but have never met.
- It provides an opportunity to forge new relationships and adds valuable information sharing.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Toronto Regional Office/Focus Group with Staff

Illustrative Quotes

"*Put faces to names and to e-mail addresses.*"

5.18 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Allowing staff to gain broader experience and knowledge in different areas of the Department, such as:

- ADMO invites unit heads to speak about their unit's work.
- HRCC visits are made by different organizational units to gain appreciation of work in operations.
- Branch meetings are held to discuss organizational units work/priorities

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Regular interaction is beneficial.
- Better understanding of other organizational units/Department as a whole is gained.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Toronto Regional Office/Focus Group with Staff

Illustrative Quotes

"A day in the life of ..."

5.19 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

The staff of the HRCC has a better understanding of the goals and objectives of their organization and the Department.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The office now has specific service standards in place.
- Business Planning in the HRCC has increased staff understanding and active participation in decision making.
- Business Plans are shared with all staff who are encouraged to provide their input into the planning process.
- Self-directed teams operate well and efficiently
- Regular unit meetings (weekly) and staff meetings (monthly) ensure participation of all organizational units, and staff are encouraged to contribute to the meeting agenda.
- Communications are always two-way and open.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

5.20 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Staff have all the information they need to provide information to clients.

Background

- The HRIF program was new in 1996; there were some concerns that not all information was available to administer this program.
- E-mail was introduced in late 1995; staff were still being trained when the Decima survey was done.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Staff are more comfortable that they have and understand the information needed to counsel clients, particularly on the new programs introduced in the past two to three years.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

5.21 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Innovative workplace

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- HRCC has encouraged and achieved co-location with Veterans Affairs Canada.
- Co-location with other partners encourages more interaction and collaboration on common activities.
- It also encourages sharing of ideas and each other's best practices, contributing to improvements in both partners' operations.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

5.22 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

The staff sessions that were held within the region outlining options for staff contemplating the transfer to the province with the Labour Market Development Agreement

Background (How it was developed)

A series of staff sessions was held for all staff potentially impacted by the LMDA in the Region. The sessions were a joint effort between HRDC Saskatchewan Region and the Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Department of the provincial government. The intent of the sessions was to outline the options for transfer of staff, including benefits, compensation and collective agreement articles.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The sessions were well received by staff and enabled people to make informed decisions concerning the choice to volunteer to the province or seek alternative work within HRDC or the federal public service.
- As a result of these sessions, staff was able to make more informed decisions concerning the LMDA transfer process.

Source of Information

Saskatchewan Region, North Saskatchewan HRCC

5.23 Supporting People

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

"Sacred Time" – setting aside a specific time each week to ensure important communications/actions occur (e.g. regular weekly staff meeting with manager and staff). Sacred time may also be set aside for other purposes to improve communications and relations.

Background (How it was developed)

Sacred Time was developed through the Regional Management Board (of Agriculture Canada in Winnipeg). It was started so that there was a regular time each week set aside. Agriculture used Tuesday afternoons (usually staff meetings, etc.) and Friday mornings were a catchup day.

Employees needed a time to do those jobs that cannot be interrupted by phone calls or walk-in traffic.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

It was successful because every unit did it and everyone respected this time and did not go to the people in the units at this allotted time.

Source of Information

Saskatchewan Region

6.1 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Voice communication system at NHQ for communicating emergencies – The 997-3000 voice bulletin system (message relay number) is a dial-in number to find out the status of operations or of the building.

Background (How it got developed)

Part of Business Resumption Planning which originated out of the 1998 Ice Storm.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Accurate – It provides a "single" reliable source from which to retrieve the required information as opposed to relying on radio stations carrying mixed messages.

- Timely – the system disseminates the information to a large volume of clients at the same time.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

6.2 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Information technology booklet on how to get started using the Intranet/Internet

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

If you don't know how to use the Internet, this is a good tool to get you started. It is concise and simply written, not overpowering, and gets right to the nuts and bolts.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

6.3 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Surveys

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

Surveys "take the pulse" of the organization or issue, but are good only if there is follow-up (action), and results are shared.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

6.4 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Breaking the Barriers

Background (How it got developed?)

FAS National meeting, wherein 6 HRCC Directors were invited to discuss impacts of downsizing and carrying on business. The bottom line was if FAS couldn't figure out a way to be more helpful (policy and procedurally) then it should not stand in the way of what needed to be done. Barriers needed to be removed.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- This was a good reporting tool. Put ADM's "face on the line" - commitment.
- Issues were documented and stayed visible until action was taken.
- Strengthened the voice of the Regions.
- Useful learning tools to investigate and respond to issues by explaining why some controls or policies were in place.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

6.5 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Newsletter – The establishment of a regularly produced newsletter, *Radar*, which is distributed to all staff and Regions.

Background (How it was developed)

This practice was established by the YID with the support of the DG to ensure all members are well informed of ongoing activities, the future direction and planning for YID/HRIB and Regions.

Each issue contains feature articles on issues identified by units, Regions or HRIB. All staff and Regions have an opportunity to write/input to the newsletter, as well as share ideas and best practices.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

Feedback has been very positive to date. This approach facilitates communications and provides an opportunity/vehicle for the staff and Regions to share information in a tangible, unique manner.

Source of Information

HRIB, NHQ, Youth Initiatives Directorate

6.6 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

NHQ Employee Voice Bulletin System – A sticker was provided to attach to the back of employee passes that identifies a toll-free number to find out the status of operations in the building (e.g. building closures).

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

There is one source of information, readily available to all staff.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ

6.7 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

I&C Service contract with region to negotiate turnaround times.

Background (How it was developed)

It was developed from the belief that the regions are one of our primary clients.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- It allows regions to negotiate with us how we will provide our service to them, what we will provide and when. Specifically, we negotiate how we will provide them with documentation.
- There is commitment to consult with I&C at the beginning and throughout the development of any new program/policy to allow the regions sufficient time to consult with their clients (HRCCs).
- There is commitment to hold regular national meetings to provide players with the opportunity to discuss policy and budget issues and be updated.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ, Investigation and Control

6.8 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Regional Desk Officer – one main contact for a specific region – Only one call is needed to receive the answer. The system works well; however, some regions do not use it but have their own contacts. It works especially well when we have no idea about the person we should contact to get an answer.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

With the complexity of programs and various responsibilities, this provides all regional staff with the name of one person they can count on to point them in the right direction, and find answers or a contact person for them.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ

6.9 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

ISP Info PSR – a high-level newsletter approved by the ADM and circulated a few times a month.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

The newsletter gives people a "heads up" of current issues as well as status reports.

Source of Information

Income Security program, NHQ

Illustrative Quotes

"It keeps us informed of current events in the Branch. The ADM ensures that the subject matter is pertinent."

6.10 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Paper deskdrops – Use of paper deskdrops to deliver messages.

Background (How it got developed)

The bulk of our communications comprise e-mail and "go find it on the Web" communications. Information in this format is easily ignored.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach successful?

We have perhaps gone "too electronic" in our communications. There is a need to capture people's attention with something different. In this regard, there is a continuing value to the strategic use of hard copy communications – notices, brochures, memos, etc. This approach was particularly successful in advertising the recent Year 2000 event sponsored by the NHQ LAN team where hand-delivered notices and a poster campaign helped draw a significant crowd.

Source of Information

Systems, NHQ

6.11 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Use a "white board" in units to track "who's here," issues for the day, thoughts for the day, have a little fun (cartoon). Use bright colours, imagination, and take risks. Place it in a focal point, for all to see. The practice has expanded to other units and is also used to note who wishes to see someone in an office and what the issue is to discuss. It allows the individual to go back to work until the person is ready to meet.

Background (How it got developed)

The idea started off as an in/out board and posting of statistics. Soon comments and thoughts and pictures appeared. Staff make a point of looking at the board to see "what's new."

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

It works! The location and use of colours catches your eye and interest. It is simple and safe when the "ground rules" are clear to everyone using it.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, Edmonton South HRCC

6.12 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Use a local newsletter or e-mail to profile a new employee (complete with picture) and to profile an employee under a "did you know?" section.

Background (How it got developed)

Constant turnover of staff, large offices, and simply lack of time create situations where many staff do not know each other or anything about the person. It was leading to situations of working among strangers.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- This communications approach builds understanding, relationships, and allows individuals to get to know people better.
- It allows staff to see a different side of the person the job does not allow time for.
- It creates a sense of community.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, HRCC Calgary Centre

6.13 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Establish a book/binder on local office operational procedures for staff.

Background (How it got developed)

An HRCC often has slightly different processes and procedures because of operational and logistical reasons. New staff and current staff have to be aware of these differences to ensure consistency in service delivery and workflow.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The book/binder provides consistency in service delivery.
- Staff stay informed.
- The result is fairness to clients
- Staff provide input on differences from other offices. This leads to discussion and improvements on local procedures to improve service.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, Insurance, HRCC Red Deer

6.14 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Set up a list of contact names and telephone numbers as first contact for inquiries as well as a list of contacts and phone numbers listing which person is responsible for what.

Background (How it got developed)

The Alternative Delivery Sites and the HRDC sites needed to improve service to the public. Staff and clients were frustrated with trying to get through to the right person.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Those lists provide faster and more professional service to the public.
- They are more efficient and help develop relationships with your service partner.
- They also ensure that the client receives an answer at the first point of contact, particularly important when you consider how far some clients travel to receive service.

Source of Information

Alberta Region, Iqaluit HRCC, Nunavut

6.15 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Messages placed on white board near back door. Notices placed on all exit doors in large offices.

Background (How it got developed?)

To keep people informed on meetings/birthdays, outlines special events, office visitors

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Easy to let everyone know what is happening
- Reduces the number of e-mails
- Everyone sees it when exiting building... a good reminder
- Staff can put their own notices on it

Source of Information:

Manitoba Region, Winnipeg/Selkirk

Illustrative Quotes

"Works best in offices with only one exit"

6.16 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Use of the Online Calendar on the system to book meetings rooms, boardrooms and training rooms.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

This has saved a lot of time by having one central area where all staff can either book a meeting or find out whether a meeting or boardroom is already booked and for what purpose.

It stops having one person trying to contact others in a group, much back and forth coordinating, and juggling the schedules of many different people.

Source of Information

New Brunswick Region, National Services, Bathurst

6.17 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Newsletters: "HRD It Through the Grapevine" *or Union Matters* "Alliance Bulletin"

Background (How it got developed)

The two newsletters were developed several years ago.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

The two publications provide:

- news that you may not hear otherwise about how other areas are related
- recognition of staff contributions, long service and retirements
- a news forum
- an opportunity for staff to be on the outlook for possible articles to be included in the next publications
- up-to-date news on happenings throughout the zones and the organization, and about other's achievements, upcoming workshops, courses, etc.
- the ability to read it whenever you have time
- an effective means of communication for any office and keep staff informed.
- an opportunity for staff to promote 'good' things that happen
- awareness of the department.

Source of Information

Nova Scotia Region, Cape Breton/ HRCC Glace Bay

6.18 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Suggestion box – Suggestions are followed up monthly, or more often, if required.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The practice allows everyone to be heard.
- It provides an opportunity for those who do not like to speak up at meetings to voice their concerns, suggestions, and to have these addressed (an open-door policy is encouraged for all staff).

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Managers

6.19 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A pilot for a new "Learnscape" software to allow staff to do a self-assessment of core competencies and their learning needs.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The software allows staff to determine their own strengths and learning needs.
- It provides confidential results which can be used by staff individually.
- The results can also be used in discussions with managers for personal development.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Managers

6.20 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Scarborough Employment Services brochure

Background (How it got developed)

The Etobicoke HRCC developed the first brochure in the GTA area.
The Scarborough brochure was developed through community partnership, involving other partners and was made available to clients in the HRCC Resource Centre.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The brochure is a handy reference tool for HRDC staff and for external parties, provides all information, is very user-friendly, and is easy to follow.
- The brochure is efficient in information dissemination and is widely distributed (including MP's offices, libraries, etc.).
- It has been used by other offices to design their own information booklets.
- Information is available to clients (and staff) in one place
- The brochure is purchased in bulk, and is more cost-effective (no need for photocopying).

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Staff

Illustrative Quotes

"Instant information, instant communication, instant response."

6.21 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A bulletin board to post individual/unit/HRCC accomplishments

Background (How it got developed)

The need to recognize individual and team efforts resulted in several ideas; eventually, the bulletin board was set up to regularly post various accomplishments.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The bulletin board provides visible recognition for good efforts to individual employees, work teams and the office as a whole.
- It is regularly updated to keep all staff aware of the most current accomplishments.
- It encourages employees to excel in their performance.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

6.22 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Component Installation Requests (CIRs)

The CIR chart is a management tool designed to track and display the processing of all component installation requests. It covers delivery and set-up of new versions of systems, applications and hardware. The chart is included in the listing described above.

Users can go to **http://forum.qc.prv/asp/exec/dic/tabbord.asp** for information on each request made to the systems group. The information is organized into four sections: project overview, state of progress, technical specifications, and list of offices involved.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

The chart systematizes the CIR validation, installation and dissemination process, and provides an accessible regional showcase for achievements in this area.

Source of Information

Quebec Region

6.23 Tools

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Integrated regional communications strategy for both LMA and WFA integrated a variety of communication tools. Information was communicated through **desk drops, general staff meetings** with managers, followed by **meetings with affected groups of employees.** Employees were also provided with the opportunity **for one-on-one discussion** with managers or specialists. **E-mail** was used throughout this exercise to distribute general information. An important part of the strategy was the establishment of a **"Question and Answer" e-mail address**. This allowed staff to ask questions of management and specialists on an ongoing basis. Answers to questions of a general nature were shared across the region. This practice served to clarify a number of important points and to clarify peoples' understanding.

Background (How it was developed)

Previous experience in managing change and communicating complex information had shown this approach to be effective. The magnitude of this exercise required an integrated strategy.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- This strategy was particularly effective because of the integration of a variety of communication tools and methods.
- Using the correct method for a particular message taking into consideration the content and the detail of the information (e.g. face- to- face meetings) helped to communicate.

Source of Information

Saskatchewan Region

7.1 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Director General Christmas message to staff, in which realizations of the Branch were recognized, an update on Branch renewal was provided and upcoming challenges and practices were identified.

Background (How it got developed)

The e-mail message was sent to staff in December 1997. The Branch was in transition between DGs. Peter Lantos issued it, the Acting DG at the time.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- This message allowed staff to see accomplishment of the own work unit and Branch as a whole.
- Management has an opportunity to give credit and show appreciation for work.

Source of Information

Communications Branch, NHQ

7.2 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Management providing fast, reliable feedback on business activities – **Some managers make an effort to provide immediate, personal feedback on HRDC business activities, such as National Management Board decisions.**

Background (How it got developed)

Physical separation is having an adverse impact on building and maintaining working relationships

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

Management initiative is behind its success.

Source of Information

Communications Branch, NHQ

7.3 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Visible Leadership – Every time the DM, ADM, DG presents himself/herself in front of staff, a powerful message is being delivered, over and above the words that are being spoken.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

A leader speaking directly to staff avoids the "tribal" effect of information being filtered as it passes through various levels.

The message reflects the leader's integrity and credibility.

Taking the time to deliver the message directly says
- that the message is important
- that the audience is also important.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

Illustrative Quotes

"It's not what is said, but how it is delivered, that matters."

7.4 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Minutes of Management Meetings

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

Distributing the minutes from management meetings, sharing the information, keeps staff connected to management.

Source of Information

FAS, NHQ

7.5 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

The establishment of and sharing of minutes of the interdepartmental meetings. **These minutes are shared with all participating departments, all YID staff and the Regions.**

Background (How it was developed)

This practice was established by the YID with the support of the DG to ensure all participating departments and Regions were fully apprised of the interdepartmental activity. This was a request by the Regions at the regional workshop in February 1999.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

Feedback has been very positive to date. This approach facilitates communications and provides an opportunity/vehicle for staff and Regions to keep informed of operational and policy issues related to the inter-departmental process.

Source of Information

HRIB, NHQ, Youth Initiatives Directorate

7.6 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Minutes that come down from Insurance Senior Management Committee meetings – These are sent out by the ADM's office every two to three weeks. Direct e-mail goes to each employee.

Background (How it got developed?)

It was initiated when the new ADM, Insurance, John Knubley, joined the Insurance Branch.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- The communiqué tells us what problem areas are being looked at and what's upcoming.
- When messages are kept short, it's a great system. However, when they are long and there are too many, we cannot delete them fast enough.
- It is preferable that the message is in the body of the e-mail, not an attachment.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ, ADM Insurance

7.7 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

DG Debriefing

Background (How it was developed)

The DG attends staff meetings one or two days after a National meeting and spends 30 to 60 minutes debriefing staff on what went on.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- The information is still fresh.
- The message comes right from the top and there is top-down support.
- There is an opportunity to ask questions.
- The debriefing shows that DG values his or her employees.

Source of Information

Labour, NHQ

7.8 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Electronic posting of performance reports

Background (How it got developed)

regional representatives developed the tool, which has improved over the past few years with continuous feedback and suggestions from the report users.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Ontario is showing the best performance in Canada on 7 out of 10 performance indicators.
- Performance constantly improves through the use of these reports, which contain detailed analysis of performance and any issues that need to be addressed to improve.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Insurance Managers/Belleville Sub-Regional Office

7.9 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Senior management addresses groups at the LEAD Centre during training courses.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Senior management presence and their attention to personal staff concerns which may otherwise not be filtered to them was appreciated.
- Face-to-face contact was also appreciated.
- Open two-way discussions occurred
- Management obtained questions/concerns ahead of time, thus addressing specific issues; they did not just deliver a "canned" presentation.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Staff

7.10 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Any information that is relevant to all members of an organizational unit is shared electronically, and is followed-up by a face-to-face meeting (if, and when required) to ensure that everyone has a common understanding of the information and any action that may be required. The information is copied to all other parties that may need to be aware of it (including DG's office, ADMO and NHQ).

Background (How it got developed)

This is a common practice within the Strategic Policy, Planning and External Relations group in the Toronto Regional Office.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The practice ensures that all affected staff are included in sharing of the information.
- It ensures that information sharing is a valued part of doing business, and it creates a climate that encourages input from all staff.
- The practice ensures common understanding of the information.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, Toronto Regional Office/Focus Group with Staff

7.11 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Staff have open communications with their management

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The management team shares information with staff; there is more immediate feedback and quicker reaction in both internal and external communications.
- Staff feel free and encouraged to input into various business processes.
- Their input is acknowledged and acted upon, including national focus on some of the ideas/best practices.
- Management has an open-door policy, including communications with regional headquarters.
- Many staff have worked together for some time and are comfortable approaching and dealing with each other.
- There is strong teamwork
- Managers share information and ideas they bring back from training.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

7.12 Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

The use of a **comprehensive weekly e-mail report** to keep unit staff informed of initiatives, happenings and events. The report is also shared region wide. This sharing of information keeps the rest of the organization informed which assists in working together.

Background (How it was developed)

The Partnerships, Programs & Strategic Services Group at Saskatchewan Regional Headquarters has responsibility for a wide range of activities, including Labour Market Information, Program Evaluation, Communications, HRIF/Pan Canadian Programs, Aboriginal and Federal-Provincial Relations. This creates unique challenges in communication, both within and outside the group.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- This approach has been particularly successful since the contents of the report are collected on an ongoing basis centrally by the unit Director, rather than requesting each staff member to submit information to meet a given deadline each week.
- The information is gleaned from conversations, e-mails, meetings, etc., throughout the week.

Source of Information

Saskatchewan Region, Partnerships, Programs & Strategic Services (PPSS) Group

8.1 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Project Review Process – a team-based approach for the internal review and approval of project proposals from external clients.

Staff from within the Human Resources Partnerships Directorate with particular experience/knowledge with a client or project are invited to work with the assigned project leader to resolve any issues or concerns about the project concept/proposal; collectively, this group becomes the "project review team" for the project.

Once a project has been reviewed and approved by the project review team (working level), more complete documentation is prepared and the project is sent to management for final approval.

The underlying philosophy of the project review process is that staff is given the decision-making control over the project and provide the recommendation to management concerning approval.

Background (How it was developed)

After the organizational re-structuring of HRP in 1997, staff requested that a new process be developed for the approval of projects within the Directorate; one that would reflect a team-based approach and that would improve communication and information sharing across the Directorate.

The new review process was also developed in response to increasing concerns about the ad hoc nature of project approvals and over concern that staff did not have sufficient opportunity to review/contribute to projects in areas where they had expertise.

The newly designed project review process was developed by staff at the working level and only presented to management once the staff had fully conceptualized the process

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The project review process was developed by the staff, for the staff.
- It helped to integrate the various components of the Directorate.
- It provided a mechanism for greater staff input into decision making.
- It provided a forum for staff to express concerns about project proposals and a process for the resolution of those concerns.
- It created a stronger sense of staff involvement.

Source of Information

Human Resources Partnerships, HRIB, NHQ

8.2 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

The establishment of four working groups in key activity areas to provide an opportunity for all staff to participate in the future direction of YID. The four working groups are led by Champions, and meet regularly, have a mandate and expected outcomes.

The four working groups are (1) Planning, (2) Communications, (3) Human Resources and (4) Policy.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

This approach is both a team-building and communications exercise with commitment and accountability to and from staff.

Source of Information

HRIB, NHQ, Youth Initiatives Directorate

8.3 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

CONCEP Control Consensus Enhancement Process (I&C) employee group. This group is not management driven; it is a volunteer employee group that deals with workplace issues. The I&C Welcome Booklet is just one product these employees put out. They have several items on the go. The concept group identifies issues and promotes communication up and down the organization. The group reports back to staff/management about what is going on and what initiatives are under way. It was initiated about eight years ago and was employee driven, but the DG at the time encouraged the environment and said "let's try." Anywhere from four to eight employees are members at any one time. The group meets about four or five times a year. Sometimes, it meets every two weeks and then issues become unimportant and members may not meet for six months. Issues are raised by staff. Other initiatives implemented by this group are the upward appraisal system, Regional Assignment program and peer award. All have to do with communications at some level. The group is not autonomous; information still goes to DG/ADM.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- It is employee driven.
- It is supported by management.
- Membership in the group is voluntary.

Source of Information

Insurance Branch, NHQ, Investigation and Control Directorate

8.4 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Work Teams – Staff are assigned to a number of workteams to deal with multiple projects. Sometimes individuals would lead a team; for other projects, it would be a member.

Background (How it was developed)

It was developed by a need to work between units and horizontally – *At the beginning, not everyone bought in – the message was "This is the way we're doing business."*

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Individuals bring a specific skill set to the work group, merging differing perspectives for a common goal.
- Workteams foster networking.
- The approach levels the playing field (i.e. even managers are part of work groups, not necessarily as leaders).
- It makes the manager more accessible (perceptually as well as physically) and approachable.
- It instils confidence.
- The approach knocks down "walls" – figuratively and literally.
- It provides informal training or orientation.
- It communicates a common goal and larger common vision.
- It allows team members to practise specific skills (i.e. facilitation).
- It provides informal training.
- Team leaders are invited to management meetings.
- "Best practices are not initiated or carried out by one person – you cannot be a great communicator all by yourself."
- Teams have been empowered and can make decisions and know they will be supported.
- Treatment between permanent staff and contract personnel communicates equity and fairness.
- Supervisors have to see beyond their own team – for the benefit of the entire organization.
- "Working in teams is a little bit like buying shares."

Source of Information

Workplace Information Directorate (WID) – Labour, NHQ

8.5 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Co-location of work associates

Background (How it was developed)

Labour program managers deal with a number of legal issues.

What made this communication tool/practice/approach successful?

- Co-location with Legal staff/Lawyers facilitated a rapid response to issues.
- It saves time moving from one building to another.
- It helps our ability to function effectively and efficiently.

Source of Information

Labour at NHQ

8.6 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

A SWOT (Scarborough Working Together) team has been established to address the issues raised in the 1997 Decima Environmental Assessment survey.

Background (How it got developed)

The SWOT team started as staff focus groups to address specific issues. These focus groups generated a lot of detailed information that was not included in the Decima survey.

As a result of these focus groups, a management report was prepared, addressing five main thrusts (communications, code of conduct, supporting people, planning, and facilities/workplace).

The SWOT team co-exists with other committees. Meetings are planned with other committees to review and reduce overlapping activities.

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- The SWOT team acts as a communications vehicle in the office (formally and informally with management and staff).
- A newsletter has been developed and is being distributed.
- A suggestion box process is in development to collect staff ideas
- Communications in the process is very open (Director participates).
- The committees make recommendations, management makes decisions
- Minutes of meetings are kept and circulated among staff
- SWOT team's goal is to make positive changes, not to circumvent any formal communications processes ("Informal Booster Club")
- A number of improvements in the work environment and to improve client service have already been made (e.g. lunchroom improvements, newsletters, chairs for clients in the waiting area, group breakfasts).

One of the by-products of SWOT team efforts are improvements in the internal Awards and Recognition's program (e.g. all staff now receive proper recognition for long service).

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Scarborough, Focus Group with Staff

Illustrative Quotes

"If communications are not timely, they are a waste of time."

"Effective communication is a cornerstone of an effective organization."

8.7 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Establishment of self-directed workteams

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Understanding has been increased through the work and training efforts of self-directed workteams.
- Staff now have more personal accountability for their actions and achievement of personal goals.
- Staff have a better understanding of their own work objectives and priorities.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

8.8 Workteams

Outline of *"Best Practice"*

Self-directed workteams

What Made This Communication Tool/Practice/Approach Successful?

- Staff feel much more accountable for their performance and accomplishments.
- Staff feel encouraged to present, share, explore and implement ideas.
- Many internal improvements may be decided upon within the workteams and do not require management approval.
- Work environment is much more relaxed
- Specific performance targets are more clearly defined (e.g. TAGS, savings to EI Fund) and staff work harder to meet them.
- Work team structure is continuously re-visited for improvements.
- Best practices are discussed among workteams in different committees.
- Analysis is done on what works/doesn't work and why.

Source of Information

Ontario Region, HRCC Owen Sound/Meeting with Managers and Staff

APPENDIX – D

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Suggestions for Improved Internal Communications

Although the focus of the review was to identify "best practices" in internal communications, it was recognized that those who participated in the focus groups might also have suggestions on how to improve internal communications in their respective areas or in the Department as a whole. The suggestions gathered during this review are listed below, under the same broad themes as the best practices identified.

Managing Technology

- Standardize software and hardware at all levels. NHQ uses the newest versions of software which are often not compatible with what RHQ and the field are using. It makes it difficult, if not impossible, to review attachments. Once software is tested, it should be released to everyone at the same time. Keeping the newest versions in NHQ gives the wrong message to staff at the field level.

- Use "*broadcast option*" on voice mail as an alternative to sending an e-mail message to staff.

- Create templates/electronic forms for repetitive front-end Insurance processes.

- Develop videoconferencing capability from individual desktops.

- Encourage the use of videoconferencing, which should be used instead of travelling long distances for training, for extended periods of time.

- Develop "in-house" or "in-unit" subject matter experts to troubleshoot the use of a variety of software, e-mail, voice mail and on-line systems. Tie this into learning plans and staff development. Take advantage of staff's background, training and comfort level in working with other staff.

- Individuals sharing printers should learn how to register their name on printouts to prevent confusion about to whom the copy belongs.

- Each office or zone should have a "shared drive" to keep information such as minutes from committees, meetings, LMCC, health & safety, union, etc. This will prevent e-mail accounts from getting cluttered up with these messages and attachments.

Email

- Issue or reissue e-mail etiquette guidelines along with a "cheat sheet" on how to set defaults, mail minders, use of colours, capitals, fonts, save to disk, file management, etc.

- Make arrangements with technical support staff to provide ad hoc, ongoing learning and support for use of the e-mail system for all staff.

- Operational and procedural e-mails should be assigned a file number under the subject heading, using a similar current subject filing system to that used in Insurance. This will allow the set-up of proper and consistent operational folders.

- When action is required, put a due date in the subject line.

- Put an asterisk (*) in the subject line for action or urgent e-mails.

- Develop a time management package for using e-mail.

- Watch the continuous forwarding of e-mails. Scrolling through the information to find out what the message is all about may be counterproductive. A short summary from the last sender may work.

- Fix "systems" so that HRCC staff have one workable e-mail system.

- Large units may want to set up and maintain a printed copy of operational and procedural e-mails as a common file for those who may not have read the e-mail or missed receiving it.

- Develop a hot button on the e-mail.

- Remember that e-mail is an impersonal form of communication; non-verbal communication can be misleading and is subject to interpretation.

- E-mail has become uncontrollable: too much information is being disseminated to too many people.

- Although e-mail is a time-saving tool, messages need to be structured to allow users to find the purpose of the message up-front, in an obvious format.

- When referring people to a website, provide a short description of what is on the site to allow users to make the choice of whether to go there, or not.

- E-mail messages with long, multiple attachments are very frustrating.

- Keep e-mail lists up-to-date. The onus to keep these lists current and useful should be on both the addressee and the sender.

- E-mail does not provide time to listen to the communicating party. The tool should not be used for discussion purposes, but rather as an information exchange vehicle.

- Prioritize e-mail (e.g. low, regular or urgent), and have staff become aware of and agree on what is to be included under each heading. Because there is so much e-mail and so many people get copied or included just for information purposes, the messages should be given a rating or classification. Then all staff within the unit or office should agree on what that rating means. For example, urgent would mean that it needs attention today. Regular would mean that you should read it as soon as you get a chance and it is information you will likely need in doing your job. Low would mean that you may be interested in this and should probably peruse it sometime.

Intranet

- Web pages should have a contract manager's name as well as a billboard for input. In addition, a photo of the unit and a brief description of what the unit or person does, a designated person for response and standards should also be posted.

- Each Region should have an Internet or Intranet site that all other Regions can access. This would be beneficial as staff would be able to access and view the latest information and share in the best practices of other Regions.

- Develop an efficient search engine for the entire Intranet.

- Post a flag on the desktop when an update has occurred on the Intranet.

- The people who are in charge of the information content of websites should be involved in the development of the sites. Sites should be simple, meaningful and bilingual. Developers need to consider what is valuable to other people, consider who needs to know the information, and select the audience. When it's old news, get it off the Web; review the sites and clean them up.

- Give employees training on the Internet and time to experiment with the capabilities of the systems that are available to them.

- Create a page on the Intranet of all general information that employees should be able to access (e.g. travel rates, postal codes, hotel listings).

- Have Regional Offices keep an up-to-date organizational chart on the Intranet where staff can go to view names and telephone numbers of individuals that they might have to contact in performing their daily duties. Where there is a high turnover in staff, it would be very effective and efficient if staff could go into a central database to determine who does what and where and to get the individual's telephone number.

Meetings

- Set aside a few minutes each morning with the unit to review issues, keeping it casual and light. Inform them of your schedule and work in progress. At a minimum, stop in and say hello.

- In general and unit meetings where the chair is rotated, keep announcements to a minimum and encourage the sharing of information from units and individuals. Incorporate a social event into the meeting (e.g. using food). Encourage all to attend, especially where staff are co-located with provincial partners.

- When possible, incorporate breakfast or lunch into a meeting.

- Have the unit meeting outside the office.

- Although large staff meetings are useful and provide a lot of information, staff are intimidated about asking questions. Regular smaller group meetings are essential to ensure that all staff get their issues/questions addressed.

- For ISP staff in New Brunswick Region, hold a regular weekly or biweekly conference call with a representative from each of three modes of service (Telephone Centre, Walk-In Centre and Processing Centre). New policies, updates or directives could be discussed so that each mode of service is aware of the changes and can seek out the necessary information.

- Staff in the Processing Centres believe that they get new directives, etc., more quickly than staff in the Telephone Centres or the Walk-in Centres. Because of the delay in getting the information to these centres, clients often have to be called back or are receiving inaccurate information from staff even though they called in or walked in.

- Hold a regularly scheduled "open talk" meeting (e.g. a two-hour meeting) between units (e.g. Canada Pension Plan (CPP) staff and CPP Disability staff). Often, these types of meetings result in discussions that are beneficial for client service, morale, communications and a better understanding of the roles and linkages of staff.

  This suggestion was actually "conceived" as part of a discussion on best practices in internal communications. CPP Disability staff and CPP Processing staff met for the first time and discussed some issues that both sides found very interesting and revealing about each other's work. It made them feel that they had a better understanding of issues and the importance/relevance of each other's work.

Orientation

- Design a package for new employees that includes a copy of the organizational chart and a contact person and phone number for each unit.

- When possible, interview each person in the unit to find out what work he or she does.

- Encourage trips to other offices within the region and RHQ to gain a local perspective and network.

- Ensure proper orientation for new employees in the department because it greatly enhances employee understanding of the department, its role, its business lines and its mandate.

Recognition

- Hold regular events to recognize staff contributions (e.g. BBQs, Christmas parties).

- Use short-term assignments to reward employees for a job well done.

- Use the AGORA website to recognize a staff member's long service, by providing a short summary of the person's career. This would allow colleagues to browse the information.

Supporting People

- Hold a yearly retreat with staff and encourage social interaction for staff to get to know each other better. Perhaps bring in a guest speaker.
- When they are in the office, Supervisors/managers/directors should block out time every day for staff to have access to them. Use a whiteboard or CaLander to indicate the times available for meetings.
- Encourage lunchtime sessions to learn how to use equipment or software.
- Candidates applying in competitions should have a copy of the core competencies attached to the statement of qualifications.
- Introduce short-term staff assignments as a means of gaining broader knowledge, obtaining greater staff commitment to the organization, and providing incentive for staff to expand their experience.
- The bigger the organization, the harder it is to communicate openly; communicators' accountability is important (part of management contract?). All employees need to feel comfortable in approaching their manager to ask questions/address issues.
- Work to eliminate the perception that staff are travelling for pleasure when attending conferences. Not only managers should have the opportunity to network; funds must be set aside for these types of events on a regional and national level.
- Appoint a communications representative in each area of the organization, as well as a regional representative. This person would not only act as a "master trainer," but could also assist in formulating local office communications strategies (ever more important given the contracting out of employment services), and help to reduce the number of calls to regional office significantly. This person could also assist in the development, writing and production of local office business plans, act as a communications advisor to staff, and possibly as a local media spokesperson if the local manager is not available or not comfortable with the media. He or she could also develop internal communications and information sessions.

- Conduct staff performance evaluations on a regular basis; feedback is not as regular as it should be. Good performers should be rewarded and non-performers need to be dealt with. Learning plans could replace evaluations.

- Give Information Management courses to managers to ensure that they can provide their staff with a choice of medium for the information they need.

- Take advantage of what new people coming into the Department have to offer. Respect that they come to this Department with many skills and abilities. Managers and directors should try to capitalize on and build on this diversity and these assets rather than trying to assimilate them into the old HRDC ways.

- New staff coming into an HRDC office often have a lot to bring with them in terms of fresh, clear perspectives and many ideas from previous experience in other departments, regions and private industry. One individual who is highly qualified and educated who was recently hired in a clerical position in HRDC indicated that she feels that "because she hasn't earned her stripes in this Department," her background doesn't count.

- Create opportunities for staff in larger offices to get together and mix so they can get to know each other and learn about each other's roles.

- In this group session staff still feel very segregated and separate, even after five years in HRDC, ISP and Labour in New Brunswick. Indeed different units of ISP feel that they don't even know one another. Opportunities to get to know each other would result in a better understanding of each other's roles and better morale. It feels awkward when a staff member works in the same office with someone and walks by him or her a number of times in the day, yet has never been introduced to this person and does not know what his or her role is.

- Provide managers with their own budgets so they can answer staff questions and communicate more clearly with staff on issues related to training, travel, resourcing, term extensions, etc. Staff feel that managers can rarely give them a straight answer on many simple issues because they do not have control of their own budgets. The comment "I'll check and let you know" is all too common and is a major barrier to communications and understanding.

Tools

- Take advantage of the local telephone service provider if it offers the *99 messaging service, rather than using Fan Out lists in instances where all staff have to be advised or notified of closures, emergencies, etc.

- In the Bathurst area, there can be work closures due to inclement weather and in this area the school system uses the *99 function that NB Tel provides free of charge to the receiver. In this case, the school would give NB Tel a list of all the students and their phone numbers. If there is no school in the morning due to bad weather, all families are notified at once by a message to their phone. Those who have a phone that flashes will know that a message is waiting for them, but if the phone does not have this function it will beep when picked up. If departments used this method of notifying all staff of closures or emergencies it would be more direct and effective than the Fan Out method, as often it is difficult to get hold of certain people or their numbers may have changed and then the link is broken.

- The Fan Out method means that one individual starts the message by calling two other identified employees on the listing; then those two employees call two other employees, etc. This method requires that each person always have the current telephone number and name of the two individuals at hand.

- Several issues were raised about the use of voice mail: people leave long messages on their voice mail, but do not update them when absent. It was suggested that a policy be introduced to ensure that everyone uses the tool consistently and to ensure that a live person is always available to respond to everyone's telephone calls.

- When leaving a telephone message on voice mail, leave a brief message, giving an indication of why you are calling along with your name and telephone number.

- When a local office sends a "hard file" to an HRCC to have it updated because the work has been done by the HRCC due to an urgent phone call or fax, the local office should write a memo to the file to that effect to prevent wasted effort and time on the receiving end.

- Often, there are urgent situations where a local office calls the main HRCC to get someone to take action on an EI claimant's account. The local office then forwards the actual hard copy file to the office a couple of days later. When the local official does not file a memo indicating what has transpired, the work often gets done twice or time is wasted trying to figure out why the file is there.

- BTV and videoconferencing are useful for some things (e.g. Agent 2 training), but do not work for other purposes. These resources are often being misused (e.g. e-mail training, introduction of new legislation).

- Communication that needs to be explained and understood must be a two-way process. For example, training requires two-way communication. BTV is not a good training tool as it does not promote two-way communication and is not a comfortable forum for those who are learning.

- Electronic information is good, but one cannot watch a PC screen all day to get information.

- An erosion of the knowledge base occurs when all information is provided in an electronic form (e.g. procedure manuals are not consulted as regularly in electronic form). We need a happy medium of printed and electronic information.

- What happened to the newsletters (*Panorama, Paranoia*, and *Zoom*)? They were very useful tools and were well read.

- We are much more reactive in communicating than proactive. We communicate too quickly; we do not give ourselves time to think and plan.

- Make use of the electronic form for travel expenses, with formulas built in, that has been developed in Belleville. It saves time for completion and ensures uniform use of common format.

- Specifically indicate action required in the title of memos, messages and notes, including the required action date. This practice was used previously but seems to have been discontinued in most areas.

- Electronic Boards are a good idea and have the potential to be used effectively, but the one in the Phase IV entry to the elevators is no longer effective. Perhaps it should be placed over the escalators, where people would have no choice but to read as they go up and down the escalator. If there were norms that the message was to be changed every day then people might make a point of looking. The Career Centre has a well-placed board and changes the message every day. Security gates have taken away from its effectiveness because staff are focused on finding their pass, etc.

- Provide managers with some type of support staff to assist them with the flow of information that staff need in order to provide a quality service to clients on an ongoing basis. Have Program or Operational Internet sites where staff must go automatically on a daily basis to ensure they are dealing with the latest policy information when carrying out their duties.

- This is not currently a best practice. However, staff felt strongly that they are not always getting , as quickly as they should, the information they need to do their jobs. This information is getting "bottlenecked" at the managers' level. They feel this is particularly the case since the organization has flattened. Since managers are being pulled in so many directions and they are often out of the office, there is a big need for some best practices in this area.

Visible Leadership/Information Sharing

- Discourage the use of e-mail to celebrate success, as it becomes just another message lost in the shuffle. Vary the approach using staff meetings, postings on whiteboards, newsletters, etc.

- Use words of encouragement, pictures, etc., to celebrate success. The posting of numbers loses its meaning after a while.

- Do not rely on e-mail for all information sharing.

- Review the corporate use of videos; they should be short, snappy and entertaining.

- Senior managers should use BTV to introduce themselves to staff or to thank staff for a job well done. Sincerity is very important. This type of message delivery is much more personal than viewing a video or receiving e-mail.

- Communication in the organization has improved tremendously in the past two years. Further improvements can be made, however. The management teams meet regularly but do not always share the information and/or give feedback to the staff.

- Senior management presence is always appreciated (particularly when major changes are being announced/implemented).

- With the expansion of our partnerships with other departments, communities and the private sector, it is important to include these partners in our internal communications (what used to be external communications can now be considered internal).

- LMDA information to staff is inconsistent and does not provide useful details. Staff concerns are not being addressed; not all people involved get an opportunity to communicate and communication is not open to all parties involved.

- Managers should synthesize and share with staff the information they obtain through conferences, training and meetings, when the information is relevant for staff.

- The Decima survey showed a decrease in staff's willingness to regularly discuss how to improve work and the office environment. This is no longer a major issue. In 1996 and 1997, the office was subjected to many changes which should have been discussed more regularly and thoroughly with the staff to ensure that changes would have resulted in improvements in the HRCC.

- Filter information laterally and vertically, before it is disseminated.

- Linkages are needed to ensure staff get better messages and consistent information from all sources. The amount and diversity of information is lacking in coordination.

- Ensure that the roles and responsibilities of staff are clearly outlined and understood. Often, miscommunication results because people are unclear about others' roles and what the expectations are. Once this is clearly outlined and identified, misunderstandings are often resolved.

- Have one individual identified in each HRCC or zone to disseminate "soft or general" information. Staff in some areas feel that they are getting the operational information they need to do their jobs, but some are not getting the so-called "soft information" such as assignment opportunities, travel rate changes, and other general information. It is felt that some people don't get this information because managers feel differently about whether or not it is important to pass this type of information on to staff.

- Managers who walk around and talk to their staff are likely to get a feeling and feedback on the vibes in the office. Often this part of communicating is skipped, but it is one sure way to get a good feel for the mood of the staff and get feedback on internal issues that the managers might not normally receive.

- Reinstitute the "General Delivery" mode of communication that was used in the New Brunswick Region. It was a very effective tool but has disappeared over time.

Workteams

- Set up a logbook to note outstanding issues from the last shift, plus briefing notes, for those job sharing or on shift work.

- Undertake joint initiatives with representation from all units. This prevents duplication of efforts, keeps everyone informed and provides a single report upon completion.